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**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF  
PERSUASION**

"Oh, what poor creatures we are, what poor creatures!"—*Brieux*.

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!—*Shakespeare*.

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION

BY

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## PREFACE

**I**N the first three chapters of this book the elements of persuasion as a mental process are distinguished, and various forms of false persuasion in individuals and groups are described; it is shown how, from the very nature of the process involved, our persuasion of ourselves is only too apt to degenerate into self-deception, and how our persuasion of others may easily assume the form of a deliberate attempt to exploit their mental or moral weaknesses. Chapter IV indicates how the tendencies of false persuasion may be counteracted, and on what lines persuasion may be rightly directed. Up to this point the subject is treated mainly in its psychological aspect.

The subsequent chapters, which are closely related to, and follow naturally, the study of persuasion as a mental process, deal with persuasion more exclusively as a form of expression. In this part of the book special attention is given to such modern forms of propaganda as advertisements, newspapers, the cinematograph, the novel, and the drama. Chapter VII discusses the more formal persuasion of books and speeches, and in the last chapter an attempt is made to define the typical features that are likely to mark the persuasion of the future.

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The subject is illustrated throughout by frequent reference to the situations of everyday life and recent public events.

Since we are all, throughout our lives, continually persuading, or trying to persuade, ourselves or other people, and are inevitably, whether we will or no, played upon by innumerable persuasive influences, it may be claimed that the subject of the book is of general and vital interest. In these days of insistent propaganda, when the "publicist" is knocking loudly at the doors of all and sundry, it would seem to be of especial importance that we should be able to judge his claims dispassionately and justly.

Some of the chapters may appeal, perhaps, more intimately to politicians, lawyers, preachers, journalists, pamphleteers, and the many other writers and speakers among us who have an axe to grind in public: these, possibly—at least, such is the author's pious hope—may be assisted by the perusal of the book to put a keener and a truer edge on their weapons.

The book may be regarded, from a certain standpoint, as being a contribution to the literature of reconstruction. If we are to reconstruct our institutions effectively, we must first reconstruct our methods of thinking and learn how to persuade ourselves and others rightly.

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**CHAPTER I**  
**THE PROCESS AND ELEMENTS OF**  
**PERSUASION**



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROCESS AND ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION

MAN has been described as a *reasoning* animal ; and every one likes to think that the description is applicable to himself. The instinctive and impulsive side of our nature, as contrasted with the rational, has been apt to be ignored both by the man in the street and by the writer on psychology : it has been considered, perhaps, to be not quite respectable. In recent years, however, writers on psychology have come to recognise fully the important part that impulse and emotion play in human life. As a matter of fact, men do not, usually, act rationally in the sense that they first carefully calculate the means that will enable them to realise their end, and only then act ; and, whether they calculate thus or not, the fundamental source of their actions is always some instinct or emotion that they seek to satisfy. To say this is to say nothing derogatory to human nature ; indeed, as we all know, to act on impulse is often much more respectable than to act from

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calculation. If much of the wrong-doing of the world may be attributed to the uncontrolled working of selfish impulses, it should also be remembered that impulse is the source of art and science, and of many of the best things in life.

Impulse is one of the non-rational elements in our nature, but this does not imply that it is necessarily irrational, or that it works against reason. In this chapter an attempt will be made to show that the process of persuasion is, fundamentally, a non-rational process, dominated much more by the emotional and impulsive part of our nature than by the rational. But this circumstance, while it accounts, partially, for the extreme ease with which we are able to delude ourselves and others, must not be regarded as in itself a condemnation of the process, or as implying that it is, of necessity, irrational.

The starting-point of all persuasion, of ourselves or others, is a belief or wish. Holding a certain belief, or desiring that a certain course of action shall be pursued, we set out to justify our belief and the conduct that it implies. Thus, before he begins to speak, the orator whose aim is persuasion has already present in his mind a belief or wish, fully formed, from which all his arguments and appeals flow; and the effectiveness of his persuasion will be proportionate to the clearness and fulness with which the belief has been defined, and the degree of conviction with which it is held. When we persuade ourselves, also, it is no less true that the belief or wish we seek to confirm is given beforehand. In this respect persuasion differs from the process of rational logic.

When we employ the process of rational logic our object is either to discover or to demonstrate. We may desire, for instance, to discover the conditions under which a candle will burn, and this we may do by a process of induction from a series of experiments. The mere fact that here we are seeking to *discover* a true conclusion indicates that it is not given beforehand. Again, when logical demonstration is our aim, a proposition is advanced hypothetically, no pre-supposition being made as to its truth or falsity, and the whole course of the reasoning is directed to furnish proofs of its inherent validity. The methods of logical discovery and demonstration are most successful when they are applied to natural phenomena on which we can experiment, but they are also applicable to human affairs : men do reason logically and disinterestedly about human conduct (especially other people's conduct), discriminate between alternatives, and refuse to assent to beliefs the implications of which they have not investigated. The method of persuasion, however, is much more common. In it we start from a belief or wish that is given beforehand : instead of following, the belief precedes the process. Superficially, indeed, the logic of persuasion may resemble, or simulate, a logical demonstration, but in reality, starting not from a hypothesis but from a belief already fully formed and accepted, and destined to dominate it throughout, it is quite different.

Our effective beliefs regarding human life and conduct are determined not by reasoning but by many unconscious and frequently irrational factors. We believe because we wish to believe, so

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that we may satisfy our instincts and emotions and sentiments, because our environment and education have made certain beliefs seem necessary, because our fathers have believed before us, or because it is convenient and expedient to think as our neighbours do. In self-persuasion the belief from which the process starts is often held by us quite unconsciously, having its origin in many remote factors, and the process itself may be to a large extent unconscious. In the persuasion of others we begin with a conscious belief, and the subsequent process is a conscious, deliberate, and more or less systematic attempt to impress our belief on others. But always, alike in the persuasion of ourselves and others, our purpose is to gain approval, our own or that of other people, for beliefs or wishes already formed and accepted by us.

We have used the terms 'belief' and 'wish' as if they were synonymous. Our beliefs and our wishes, indeed, are inextricably interwoven; or rather, they are not really to be distinguished. The state of mind from which persuasion starts implies an intellectual element, which we may express by the term 'belief,' and at the same time a practical element, a reference to conduct and action, which we may express by the term 'wish'; but in an ultimate analysis those elements are seen to coalesce, the essence of both being that they are latent courses of action by which our environment may be modified. When a politician makes a speech in which he advocates the nationalisation of land, we may indicate the state of mind from which his persuasion starts by the term 'belief,' or by the term 'wish,' indifferently; he believes, and also

wishes, that land should be nationalised ; the fundamental character of his belief or wish is that it is a latent course of action. The object of persuasion is to make explicit and definite the course of action implied in the initial belief or wish, and to furnish adequate motives and justification for it.

A distinctive characteristic of the process of persuasion is the more or less direct reference that it implies to human conduct and action. John Jones, having pondered deeply on the evils produced by man's love of beer, considers the remedies, and decides in favour of Prohibition. He makes propaganda, and persuades Samuel Smith that Prohibition is desirable. Smith's conversion could not be described as effectual if, having in Jones's presence joyously assented to Prohibition, later in the evening he had proceeded ruddily to the public-house and consumed his customary pint. His opinions having been changed, his behaviour too will be modified. His imagination has been caught, his emotional nature has been touched, his will moved, by Jones's eloquence. In the face of that vivid picture of the degradation of life in the slums, fallen so low through the consumption of beer, in despite of the sympathy and pity it has evoked, how possibly could he consume the customary pint again ? He will drink beer no more, the accursed thing must be prohibited, he too will make propaganda. Not merely his belief, but his behaviour, has been modified ; he has been really persuaded.

By this direct relation to conduct the fundamental character of persuasion is largely determined.

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Our beliefs and wishes, from which the process of persuasion starts, our latent and premeditated courses of action, depend mainly on the emotional elements in our nature. The motive force that impels men to action is always some instinct, tendency, emotion, sentiment, or passion. We accept a belief or wish, and act so that it may be realised, primarily with a view to satisfying some aspect of our emotional nature. Take, for instance, the case of a man who, his country being at war, wishes to volunteer for service in the Army. Underlying his wish there may be one or several emotional tendencies: he may have a nagging wife at home and anticipate escape and relief in foreign service, he may be actuated mainly by vanity, by the desire to appear worthily in the eyes of his neighbours and relatives, or by the desire for change and the love of adventure, or he may be prompted by the purest motives of patriotism and ideal duty; but, whatever his particular motives may be, if he is to act in accordance with his wish, his mind must be possessed and dominated not by the mere intellectual perception of a certain situation or state of affairs, but by some more or less powerful emotional tendency. The fundamental character of persuasion, as a process that aims at modifying conduct and inducing action, is that it is an emotional process. In this respect, again, it differs from the process of rational logic, which should have no tincture of emotion, or so little, and of such a character, as, having exercised no diverting influence on the course of the reasoning and on the conclusion ultimately reached, may be considered negligible.



Persuasion resembles rational logic in that it consists essentially in a series of judgments, but there the resemblance ends. Its judgments are quite different in kind from those of rational logic, in which the terms and propositions are related to one another solely in so far as the intellect perceives a resemblance between the things they denote: underlying the reasoning is the principle that things that are alike in some points will be alike in others. For example, if we argue that "all material substances have weight, and atmospheric air is a material substance, therefore it has weight," the conclusion depends on the point of resemblance (materiality) stated to exist between atmospheric air and substances that have weight; or, again, our reasoning may sometimes be based on the assumption that, since particular examples belonging to the same class, or due to the same cause, resemble one another, a relation between them may be postulated. The cogency of rational logic depends on our being made to perceive and admit an inherent and significant resemblance between the terms and propositions employed, compelling us to acknowledge the truth of the conclusion. The process starts from a general or a particular proposition, and travels to its conclusion through a series of propositions strictly related to one another by the principle of resemblance, and constituting a rigorous chain of reasoning.

The logic of persuasion, on the other hand, starts from a belief or wish, and proceeds to its conclusion, which is really given beforehand in the initial belief or wish, through a series of judgments related to one another, essentially, only in so far as each serves

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to promote the realisation of our belief or wish, and the consequent satisfaction of its underlying emotion. In persuasion the attitude of the subject is exclusive and one-sided: all his judgments assign value to objects, persons, and actions only in so far as they tend towards the satisfaction of the emotions, sentiments, or passions underlying the initial belief or wish. For instance, lately (*vide News of the World*) Gwendoline Guinevere, an attractive young lady, had made the acquaintance of a number of young officers, and, prompted mainly by vanity and the love of pleasure (*vide* headline, "Vanity her Downfall"), she desired the acquaintanceship to continue. To realise her purpose she must make herself as attractive as possible and adorn herself with the latest things in fashionable attire. Unfortunately she has no money. No matter: for ready money ready wit may serve. In the course of a walk through the West-end, she visits several millinery establishments, where she explains that she is the scion of a noble house, and, by what are afterwards described (in the newspaper report of the proceedings) as "fraudulent representations," succeeds in obtaining "large quantities of ladies' clothing". In this instance the belief from which the persuasions of Guinevere started was that to preserve her friendship with the officers a supply of fashionable clothing was necessary—in her own simple and emphatic words: "I have met with a number of officers during the past fortnight, and wanted to get better clothing to keep in their company". This belief or wish would be followed by a mental process in which all considerations unfavourable to the realisation of

the wish would be swept aside as being of no value, and means devised for the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions or sentiments involved.

In the more conscious and systematic forms of persuasion the same process is implied. A speaker whose aim is to persuade an audience to act in accordance with his beliefs propounds a series of judgments essentially related to one another only by the circumstance that they will assist him to realise his object. There may be little or no logical connection between them ; they may be, and often are, even logically inconsistent with one another ; but they will be accepted by him as valuable in proportion to the closeness of their relation, real or apparent, to his ultimate aim, in proportion to their capacity to satisfy the emotions, sentiments, or passions by which he is animated. For this reason there will always be found, in the arguments of a speaker or writer whose end is persuasion, however cool or dispassionate he may be, an appeal to the emotions and sentiments that seem likely to lead to the action he desires. Before a man will act he must be persuaded that the action will answer some end ; and that which gratifies no emotion or sentiment in his nature can never be an end for him. The judgments, then, that constitute the process of persuasion, are judgments of approval or disapproval, or judgments of value, in which we estimate the value of things relatively to the emotion that underlie our beliefs or wishes. Underlying or motivating our judgments of approval there may be admiration, gratitude, self-regard, honour, pride, interest, patriotism, or any other emotion or sentiment induced through sympathy ; while our

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judgments of disapproval are prompted most frequently by shame, reproach, scorn, anger, or fear.

So far we have not distinguished between 'emotions' and 'sentiments', considered as the basis of persuasion and the motive force of all our beliefs and actions; but it is of more than theoretic interest for our purpose that we should do so.

The emotions, as distinguished from the sentiments, are sudden reactions of our egoistic and altruistic instincts: they endure only for a short time, and their influence is more or less fleeting. They prompt to action; but their motive power is not sufficiently lasting and not of such a kind as to result in a deliberate, sustained, or organised course of action. Persuasion rings the changes on all the emotions; fear, disgust, wonder, anger, subjection, elation, tender emotion, admiration, awe, reverence, scorn, contempt, loathing, envy—all may serve to vitalise our beliefs and motivate our actions, but they fulfil this function more effectively when they are aroused within the circle of such a more widely organised system of emotional tendencies as is denoted by the term sentiment. A sentiment, such as love or hate, differs from an emotion, as, for instance, anger or fear, in that it is not merely a transient mental state, but an enduring tendency to experience certain emotions. Thus, as is pointed out by Mr. McDougall in his *Social Psychology*,<sup>1</sup> we may be said to love or hate a person even when he is not actually present to our thought; and the sentiment with which we

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to Social Psychology*. By William McDougall, F.R.S., Ninth Edition. Methuen & Co., 1915.

regard him, being a potential source of emotions, may appear in anger, fear, jealousy, reproach, etc., according to the situation in which he occurs to our minds. The persuasions of a speaker who aims at recruiting volunteers for the army of a nation at war starts from the belief that men are required and the wish to help in obtaining them. Underlying this belief and wish, guiding and governing it in all its directions, may be the sentiment of patriotism. The emotions potentially comprised within this sentiment are many, and the speaker may weave a wide circle of appeal. He may move his hearers to anxiety and fear: our enemies are strong, and may defeat us in the field, or starve us to surrender. He may arouse pity, disgust, scorn, contempt, loathing, and horror: our enemies have maltreated women, killed children, massacred the innocent, done deeds unspeakable. He may stir up anger, moral indignation, and revenge: shall the enemy not be made to pay for treaties broken, rights disregarded, lands plundered and ravaged? He may appeal to pride (itself a sentiment and nursery-ground of emotion), recalling to his hearers the glorious achievements of their ancestors. He may invoke curiosity and expectation, the spirit of adventure, the tendency in man to dare all in defiance of danger. Those feelings in themselves would be potent to induce the action that the speaker desires; but, being related and unified within the more stable and abiding sentiment of patriotism, the product, in part, of years or centuries of national life, their effect will be all the more pointed and weighty. Beliefs that have become crystallized into widely prevalent or national sentiments, and

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that are not the product of merely passing emotions, are the most powerful sources of appeal in persuasion.

It is sometimes said that a speaker, if he would move men to act, must appeal to their passions. If, however, the term 'passion' be used not loosely but in its stricter and more scientific meaning, the statement can hardly be accepted as correct. Passion differs from emotion in being more enduring and more dominating; and, on first consideration, it might therefore be thought to be a more potent source of appeal than emotion. But, for the orator or writer who seeks to persuade a large number of people, it cannot be so regarded. For so dominating is a real passion that comparatively few people are capable of experiencing it; and, when it is experienced, it generally operates only during some particular or limited period. Again, the passions vary with individuals to a much greater extent than do the emotions and sentiments; and the number of passions that can coexist in the same individual is limited. While the emotions, and many sentiments, are common to almost all men, or to all of a particular race or nation, the passions are more individual marks of character, and therefore do not constitute so universal a ground of appeal. Nevertheless, in self-persuasion, or in the persuasion of another individual whom we know to be dominated by a certain passion, its impulse may be compelling indeed. Under the influence of the fixed idea which passion pre-supposes, an individual will persuade himself, or may be persuaded, to any course of action that seems likely to satisfy it, and will interpret the most trifling and irrelevant incidents as justifying his conduct. While, then,

passion prompts powerfully to belief and action in individuals, when our aim is to influence large numbers of people our appeal must, strictly speaking, be rather to the emotions and sentiments.

The distinction that has been drawn above between emotion, sentiment, and passion is of both theoretic and practical interest; but the main point to be emphasised here is that in all cases of persuasion the emotional element in one form or another, working by way of instinct, tendency, emotion, sentiment, or passion, is fundamental and essential. This, however, does not imply that there are no intellectual elements in persuasion. The judgment of value itself involves an intellectual representation whose function is to give concreteness and stability to the more variable and unstable emotional element. Further, the logic of persuasion frequently expresses itself in the form of rational inference.

The belief or wish from which persuasion starts necessarily involves the intellectual perception of a certain situation or state of affairs which the subject desires to modify. According to the degree in which his representation of that situation has been detailed and complete, his persuasion will be more or less effective. If the situation has been conceived only vaguely and generally, the subsequent persuasion will also be of a vague and general character. If, on the other hand, the whole situation has been clearly defined, with all its conditions and consequences, the subsequent persuasion is more likely to be definite, detailed, and effective. The persuasions of a narrow-minded puritan, who had been in a theatre on one occasion, and, judging

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from that single experience, had pronounced all theatrical performances to be immoral in tendency, could not be definite and detailed, and would appeal effectively only to those who had approved of his opinions from the beginning.

In the persuasion of others, the presentation of the situation assumes the form of expression known as narration. It plays an important part always, but is perhaps of more special importance in the persuasion of the law-courts: there, especially, the "statement of facts", as it is called, is seen to be a necessary foundation of persuasion. The essential qualities that mark the statement of facts by an able advocate are completeness, accuracy, proportion, coherence, and unity. All the leading facts of the case, even those apparently adverse or unfavourable to his conclusions, should be stated: the concealment or the glossing over of important facts will be injurious to his pleading. And the details must be stated accurately: it is obvious, for example, that in a criminal case details of time and place may be of vital importance, and that any errors in the statement of them may invalidate the reasoning and lead to an unfavourable verdict. A proper proportion between the facts must be observed, the more significant being emphasised; and the narrative must be sequent and coherent. Those are, fundamentally, intellectual qualities, and they are involved, in various degrees, in all organised and rightly directed persuasion: a necessary element in its composition being the complete, balanced, exact, and coherent presentation, to ourselves or others, of a certain situation or state of affairs.



The intellectual factor in persuasion appears also in the form of rational inference. Having conceived an end to be attained, we may seek to devise means for its realisation ; alternative means of procedure may present themselves as being possible ; and among those a definite choice and decision must be made. Brown has become aware that he is "run down," and desires to do something to improve the state of his health. He considers the matter : shall he go for a holiday in the country, or take a 'rest-cure' for a few weeks in a nursing home ? His decision will depend on a series of judgments in which the respective capacity of the two proposals to realise his object will be gauged. If his disorder has been caused by intense and prolonged exertion in the open air, he may decide in favour of the nursing home ; if it has been caused by mental strain and confinement indoors, his decision may be for the alternative plan ; in either case, it involves a process of intellectual reasoning.

In the persuasion of others, especially, it is clear that the mechanism of rational logic is employed. We express the relations between our judgments in an apparently logical form, and the order and arrangement of our arguments are based to a large extent on reflective reasons. If we examine a political speech, or any other instance of verbal persuasion, we shall find in it arguments of all kinds, deductive and inductive, from principles and from examples, analogy, cause to effect, or effect to cause.

But, while the forms and mechanism of rational logic are employed in the logic of persuasion, their use, it must be added, is often more apparent than

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real. In persuasion the ultimate value of the series of judgments that constitutes the process is relative to its capacity to realise the dominant belief or wish and satisfy the emotions and sentiments underlying it. If we analyse any concrete instance of persuasion, it is nearly always possible to express the arguments in the form of rational logic ; but, when we have done so, the resulting forms differ essentially from persuasion, because they do not express in any way the emotions by which all its judgments are inspired.

The intellectual and the emotional elements of persuasion do not work separately, but are inter-fused, and react on one another. The emotions that we seek to satisfy modify both our presentation of the case, to ourselves or others, and the reasoning that we bring to bear on it. On the other hand, too, the intellect reacts on the emotions. By the apt representation of an event or a situation we may arouse emotion in ourselves or other people. Reasoning, too, may enable us to control better our emotions and sentiments, by assigning to them a proper relative value, setting one against another. Thus anger may be restrained by fear of the consequences of our proposed action, or by thinking of the object of our anger as somehow worthy of respect, as when Lord Chatham, in his speech on the employment of foreign troops in America, suggested to his hearers, in support of a conciliatory policy, the fear of an English defeat, and asserted that the resistance of the colonists was " the struggle of free and virtuous patriots ", with which in some respects Englishmen should sympathise.

A third constituent element in the process of

persuasion is the imaginative element, which is closely related to the intellectual and emotional elements, modifying both the presentation of the case and the reasoning that we bring to bear on it, and stimulating and strengthening the emotions.

Every belief or wish with which our persuasions concern themselves generates a series of images appropriate to it. John Jones, who believes in Prohibition, may enliven and add force to his belief by imagining in detail the environment amid which the drink traffic flourishes and works most harm—the drunkard's home, its poverty and squalid surroundings, the suffering and misery caused to women and children by excessive drinking.

At the same time, every belief tends to eliminate from consciousness images that are inconsistent with it. The picture of a group of working men, enjoying a glass of beer and, with their wives and children, finding rational relaxation amid pleasant surroundings, if it occurred at all to John Jones, would be at once rejected : it would not harmonize with his particular belief or wish.

And as the imagination plays an important part in elaborating and making concrete and vivid the past or present situation with which our persuasions deal, so it assists us to picture in detail the changed situation that will result from the realisation of our plans. For instance, in his speech on Negro Emancipation,<sup>1</sup> Lord Brougham described in the following imaginative passage the results that, as he said, would follow the abolition of slavery :—  
“ From the instant that glad sound (the proclama-

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords, 20th February, 1838.

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tion of complete emancipation) is wafted across the ocean, what a blessed change begins ; what an enchanting prospect unfolds itself ! . . . Where the driver and the gaoler once bore sway, the lash resounds no more, nor does the clank of the chain any more fall upon the troubled ear ; the fetter has ceased to gall the vexed limb, and the very mark disappears which for a while it had left. All races and colours run together the same glorious race of improvement. Peace unbroken, harmony uninterrupted, calm unruffled, reigns in mansion and in field, in the busy street and in the fertile valley, where nature, with the lavish hand she extends under the tropical sun, pours forth all her beauty profusely, because received in the lap of cheerful industry, not extorted by hands cramped with bonds. Delightful pictures of general prosperity and social progress in all the arts of civility and refinement ! ”

The course of our persuasions is influenced and guided to a large extent by the constructive power of imagination, its capacity to discover methods and adapt means to ends. In the light of past and present we foresee the future, coloured by hope and fear ; and from that prevision we devise plans that, if carried out, may lead to a better state of affairs. The best examples of persuasion, in books and speeches, are marked by a large imaginative quality—convey to the reader or hearer a sense of long vistas, a comprehensive and significant view of past, present, and future, a perception of the far-reaching sequence and connection of cause and effect.

And the imagination works in conjunction not only with the intellect, stimulating our representa-

tive and constructive faculties, but also with the emotions: those too it enlivens and strengthens. Lord Brougham's "delightful pictures of general prosperity" add to the force of his persuasion by the stimulus they afford to the sentiment of friendliness and social solidarity. By picturing vividly the details of a drunkard's home John Jones may excite or intensify in himself the emotions of sympathy, pity, and indignation, and so be moved more strongly to advocate the policy of Prohibition. Through the mechanism of the imagination the scope of the emotions is greatly enlarged. The situation that we frame or describe need not be actually present: if we imagine it as being either likely to occur or possible to realise, it may be powerful to excite in ourselves or others curiosity, exhilaration, hope, fear, or anger. Nor, for this result, need the consequences involved in the situation affect us personally: by depicting vividly the consequences for others, we may arouse pity, resentment, or moral indignation, and so persuade ourselves and our hearers or readers to a particular course of action.

Vice-versa, our emotional tendencies react on the imagination. The fearful man, seeing, or thinking he sees, danger approaching, invents means to parry or stop it: suspicion, envy, and jealousy are fertile in artifices; the revengeful man will evolve subtle plans for harming his enemy. So, in persuasion, the emotions by which we are animated draw out our creative activity, and stimulate us to the discovery and invention of the means to gratify them.

The intellectual, emotional, and imaginative

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factors of persuasion, therefore, work together. By a characteristic interplay and the organic fusion of the three true persuasion is constituted. As a creative and organic process, it implies a unifying principle, and the principle that unifies the persuasive activities alike of intellect, emotion, and imagination is the end that we seek to realise. The accurate, clear, and complete presentation of situations and events, reasoning from principles and from facts, the mechanism of rational logic ; illustrative instances and imaginative representation ; the dynamic power of emotion—all are employed in the service of the end towards which we have set ourselves. Interfused with one another, united by the principle of finality, the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions work together and constitute one process.

This does not mean, however, that there is one kind of persuasion, and one only. The constituent elements of the process are invariable ; but they react upon one another, and combine, in an infinite number of modes. In attempting to understand or explain any complex mental state or process, it is useful to consider separately its various aspects, distinguishing between them somewhat sharply ; but, if we thus distinguish, we must also bear in mind that the mere sum of those aspects does not constitute the process ; since they react variously and subtly upon one another, the process that they constitute is far more varied and complex than a mere enumeration of its single aspects, or any description or explanation of them, can suggest. The varieties of persuasion are infinite, as infinite as the varieties of men and women.

But we may conveniently distinguish three broad types, corresponding to the three main factors, of persuasion. Sometimes the process is more exclusively intellectual in kind, as when the reasoning faculty of the individual is strongly developed ; in other cases the imaginative element may be predominant ; and in others, again, the emotional. It would be easy to name other types ; but the principle underlying their differences could always be reduced, ultimately, to the relative predominance, and the quality and mode of interfusion, of the intellectual, the imaginative, and the emotional elements. We might distinguish, for instance, on those lines, between national types of persuasion. When Mr. Lloyd George speaks indiscreetly (even if truly), the character of his persuasion is explained (by his supporters) as being due to the *per fervidum ingenium* of the Kelt ; from the hard-headed Scotsman we expect a coherent and closely reasoned succession of arguments ; and from the typical Irishman a more emotional utterance. Again, the persuasion of the sexes might be differentiated : “ feminine logic ” is a byword. But such distinctions may not be pressed too far : many Scotsmen are more emotional than many Irishmen, many Welshmen more rational and “ hard-headed ” than many Scotsmen, and many men more incapable of strict logic than many women. It is convenient, for the clearer understanding of our subject, to distinguish broadly between those three types of persuasion ; but within them is comprised an infinite number of variations, in each case the particular character of the process being determined in large measure by the subject’s individuality, the predominant features of his mental build.

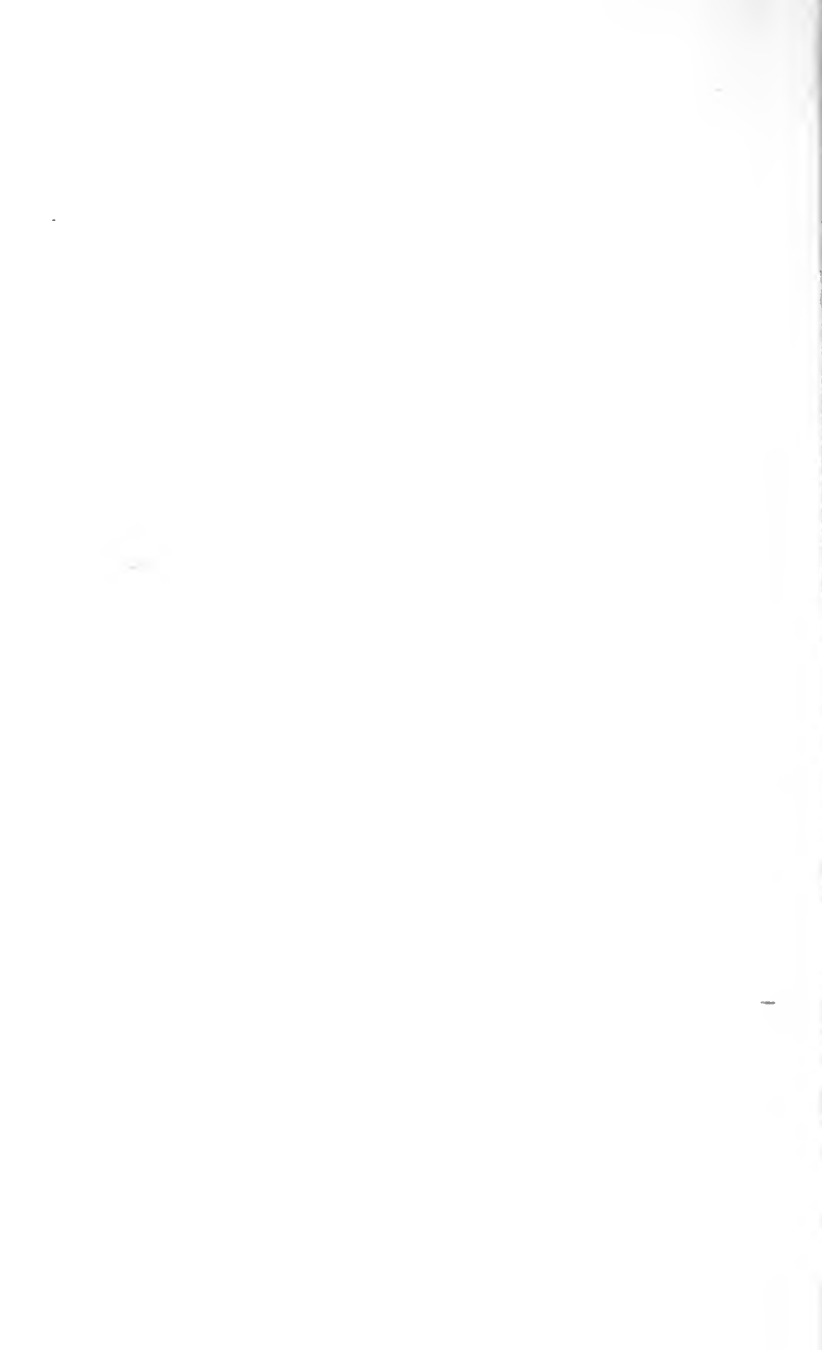
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And the process varies in the same individual at different times. Some of our persuasions are more vague, more random and uncontrolled, less coherent and rational, than others. In the wakeful hours of night our self-persuasions are apt to follow strange courses, dim, transitional, fragmentary; meditating, often only half-consciously, over something that has happened, or something we or others have done, our minds easily lapse to gloomy or absurd conclusions. Then, when daylight comes, we may forget those, and presently find ourselves indulging in pleasing day-dreams, imagining ourselves as crowned with a halo of the particular brand we fancy, winning the admiration and praise of our fellows—that, too, is a common kind of self-persuasion. And a few hours later, having gone down to the City, and met a client with whom there is a prospect of doing business, we may concentrate our whole mind on a deliberate and conscious effort to induce him to “deal”, seeking to convince, allure, and stimulate him to the action we desire. Between such a deliberate and tensely organised process of persuasion, and the more random and loose courses that we sometimes follow in persuading ourselves, there are many differences; yet in every instance the process and its elements are fundamentally the same. In all varieties of persuasion there may be discerned an end for the attainment of which, more or less consciously or unconsciously, our minds work, and a fusion, more or less complete and effective, or incomplete and ineffective, of intellect, imagination, and emotion.



CHAPTER II

THE GENTLE ART OF CAMOUFLAGE



## CHAPTER II

### THE GENTLE ART OF CAMOUFLAGE

A CHARACTERISTIC feature of the emotions is that they seek only to satisfy themselves. They tend to absorb consciousness wholly, excluding from it all reasoning as to their quality, and all considerations not immediately connected with their satisfaction. Hence contradictory emotions may influence our persuasions and conduct without our experiencing any sense of contradiction. This is sometimes expressed by saying that the principle of Non-Contradiction, which is one of the fundamental laws on which rational logic is based—is not applicable to emotional logic. According to the law of Non-Contradiction, a thing cannot both be and not be: for instance, in the law-courts it is taken for granted that a man cannot be both guilty and not-guilty. Apart from that principle, rational logic would have no purpose or value: when a proposition had been proved to be true, it would still be open to anyone to say that it might at the same time be not true: one of the basic conditions of reasoning thus removed, the whole fabric would fall to the ground. But to the emotions and sentiments as such this law is altogether foreign.

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Thus men of the most delicate artistic feeling have been known to indulge the basest and most ugly passions, wholly inconsistent with, and contrary in nature to, artistic sensibility ; and history shows that Christian peoples, while professing to believe in the law of love towards all, have committed odious acts of cruelty and persecution. During the September massacres in the French Revolution, the most contrary emotions were displayed by the revolutionists : while cruelly murdering the prisoners, they at the same time satisfied their sense of justice by setting up tribunals of a sort, and, when a prisoner was acquitted, manifested a compassionate sympathy, embracing him with transports of joy and applauding frantically.<sup>1</sup> Again, such contrary sentiments as self-abasement and elation may coexist without any sense of contradiction being felt : this is particularly common in certain cases of religious excitement, in which the subject, while full of humility and remorse, and submitting himself to all manner of disciplinary austerities, is at the same time secretly elated, possessed by a feeling of holiness and power and of the difference between himself and other mortals. Double moods of this kind, in which we are influenced by contrary emotions without perceiving their essential incompatibility, occur in the emotional life not merely of exceptional persons but of us all.

They appear even in the lives of the good and great, though for corroboration of this we should not, as a rule, turn to the official biographies, most biographers being followers of the cult of praise, intoned through two volumes. Sometimes a more

<sup>1</sup> v. *The Crowd*, by Gustave le Bon.

discerning, or more impolite, biographer lifts the curtain, and reveals to us the good and great as they really were—that is to say, as good and great, no doubt, but as shot through also with other and different strains. One of the most interesting and characteristic features of Mr. Lytton Strachey's recently published volume, *Eminent Victorians*,<sup>1</sup> is that it brings clearly to view the curiously contradictory strains of character that may subsist equably side by side in one and the same person. Mr. Strachey shows us, for instance, that, while Cardinal Manning's dominating passion was personal ambition, it was accompanied by, in some respects, great conscientiousness and strong religious sensibility, and, again, that, despite his other-worldly aspirations, in some incidents of his life he revealed a strongly marked sense of present-worldly values, expressing itself in the employment of astute or even deceitful methods. Thus, when it appeared probable that Newman would be made a Cardinal, and though, from letters in his possession, he possessed absolute knowledge that Newman desired the Cardinalate, Manning acted secretly so as to prevent this consummation, causing a statement to be published in the *Times* to the effect that Newman had refused the Hat. "On Newman's death", remarks Mr. Strachey, "Manning delivered a funeral oration, which opened thus: 'We have lost our greatest witness for the Faith, and we are all poorer and lower by the loss. When these tidings came to me, my first thought was this, in

<sup>1</sup> *Cardinal Manning ; Florence Nightingale ; Dr. Arnold ; General Gordon.* By Lytton Strachey. (London : Chatto and Windus, 1918.)

what way can I, once more, show my love and veneration for my brother and friend of more than sixty years ?' In private, however, the surviving Cardinal's tone was apt to be more . . . direct. 'Poor Newman !' he once exclaimed in a moment of genial expansion. 'Poor Newman ! He was a great hater !' "

But there is no need to revert to the chronicles of the past to discover instances of such two-faced or double persuasion ; we may detect them in ourselves, almost daily, and in all whom we meet. The ex-Kaiser of Germany is a notorious instance of a contemporary public character whose utterances and actions reflect this state of mind. The speeches he delivered during his reign were always those of a man who regarded himself as being in a very special sense the representative of God and as inspired by the most altruistic and religious motives. "On me as German Emperor", he remarked on one occasion, "the spirit of God has descended" ; and on another occasion he modestly advertised himself as "a ruler who has a conscience, who feels that he is responsible to God, who has a heart for his own people and those of his enemies". But, side by side with those religious sentiments and aspirations, there appeared also in his speeches, with a curious effect of incongruity, other and very different sentiments, such as the desire for power and the will to conquer by any means, however unscrupulous or ruthless.

In such cases it is not necessary to suppose that hypocrisy is involved. There is self-deception, certainly, but it may be largely or wholly unconscious. Since the emotions often work within us uncon-

sciously, seeking only their own gratification, and tending to exclude from consciousness all considerations likely to interfere with the attainment of their end, it is easy for us to imagine ourselves virtuous even when our effective beliefs and actions are radically vicious.

The fact that we may be actuated by emotions of which we are quite unconscious, or the power of which we do not accurately gauge, accounts for the numerous cases in which our persuasions make a sudden *volte-face*; when, having persuaded ourselves to follow a certain line of conduct, we nevertheless, at the moment of action, follow a contrary course. Thus the man addicted to liquor may have persuaded himself, out of self-respect and regard for others, to give up drink; but when temptation offers, and his boon companions are around him, he may act contrarily to his persuasions. So, too, a man may have apparently persuaded himself that to show indignation or contempt at conduct which he considers vile is, under certain circumstances, wrong and foolish; he may have fortified himself in his persuasions by many abstract considerations—that he himself is prone to error and wrongdoing, that scorn is a mark of folly, etc., etc.; but, on the very next occasion on which he encounters the conduct that has incensed him, he may act precisely as before, moved by indignation, scorn, and contempt, emotions quite contrary to those that had inspired his previous decision.

Such sudden reversals of purpose and conduct frequently furnish dramatic themes for the novelist or playwright. In one of the short stories of Mr. James Joyce's *Dubliners*, the "heroine", Eveline,

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has consented to elope, to "explore another life with Frank". At the beginning of the story we see her sitting by the window—awaiting the moment of departure. Down far in the avenue she hears a street organ playing, as she had heard it once before when her mother lay dying. She is thus reminded of a promise she had made her mother, to keep the home together as long as she could, and the voice of duty seems to call to her to relinquish her present purpose. But other motives prevail: repulsion from the sordid conditions of her home, amid which her mother had lived a joyless life, fear of her drunken father's violence, and the longing for happiness. She leaves the house, resolved to fulfil her engagement with her lover.

"She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand, and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. . . .

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand.

'Come!'

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

'Come!'

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish!

'Eveline! Evvy!'

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on, but he still called to her. She set her white face to him,



passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.”<sup>1</sup>

When people act thus contrarily to their ostensible persuasions, they are impelled by some motive-force of which they are more or less unconscious or the power of which they do not accurately gauge—some suppressed wish, based on an emotion which, while they may be unaware of its existence or strength, possesses for them a high value. So Eveline, in Mr. Joyce’s story, when the moment for decisive action arrives, is influenced much more strongly by a sense of duty than by the emotions of repulsion and fear or by the desire for happiness, which had decided the issue of her previous persuasions.

Similarly, many cases of what may be called pathological persuasion are due to suppressed wishes, based on emotions of which the subject is unconscious. In such instances the subject is irresistibly impelled to a course of action by a subconscious motive that works with morbidly exaggerated intensity and is often unnatural or sinister in kind; as when—a not infrequent case this—a mother, prompted really by jealousy, but imagining her motives to be purely disinterested and good, carries on a systematic campaign of persecution against her own daughter.

Since, then, we are often dominated by emotional tendencies of which we are unconscious, and by tendencies that are opposed in kind, although we do not recognise their incompatibility, self-persuasion might often be described more accurately as

<sup>1</sup> “Eveline,” in *Dubliners*, by James Joyce. London : Grant Richards, Ltd.

self-deception. At the same time, it must be added that in the majority of cases, when we deceive ourselves, we are not altogether unconseious of the fact. Despite the manifold aberrations and the infinite frailty of our minds, most of us find it difficult, after all, to hoodwink ourselves absolutely. When, imagining ourselves virtuous, we act wrongly, however strong and compelling the emotion that drives us to action may be, we are generally—that is, if we are normally constituted, assailed by doubts, before, during, and after the action. To meet the situation the rôle of persuasion is then enlarged. To reconcile our doubts, to satisfy our sense of the contradiction between the beliefs we profess and the deeds we do, we proceed to “reason,” with ourselves, determined to justify our beliefs and conduct at any cost, regardless of the claims of consistency and truth. And the more conscientious a person is, when his conduct is widely at variance with the moral sense of humanity, or if he feels in any degree uncomfortable when contemplating it, the more deeply does he feel the need for justification: so that the more likely he is to build an elaborate structure of reasoning, often on a very shaky foundation, with a view to retaining his self-respect. How deeply seated, one may reflect, must be the root of righteousness in human nature, to give rise to the travesties of reasoning by which often we succeed in justifying ourselves! The elaborate persuasions of the German people, attempting to justify many of their actions in the War, may be taken as evidence of the fact that they are a highly moral, if not a respectable, people!

The nature of the false persuasions in which we

are apt to indulge under those circumstances is well illustrated in the following passage from a novel by Benjamin Swift.

Joseph Ravendale, a professed churchgoer and man of piety, who had made a large fortune by the sale of Bibles, had sinned, many years before the story opens, with the wife of his friend, Mr. Delmore. He is troubled by the contradiction between his professions and his conduct, but manages to convince himself that, after all, his sin was not so grievous as that of many other religious men : so he finds comfort and consolation. " Aware of the paradox of his position as a salesman of the British Bible and the father of three families, his instinct for business made him search for personal comfort and forgiveness in the Book which, together with its satellites, had made his fortune. And he did find ample assurance in the biographies of Biblical Sinners. What sinister figures filled the lantern-slides of that old Jewish Book of war and politics and priestcraft ! Abraham, Jacob, David, and the other patriarchs, who are the founders of European religion, were all polygamous. They took mistress after mistress, and did things which would cause a decent modern man to turn his back on them. Nevertheless they were abundantly blessed, were as prosperous as they were polygamous, and it is out of their mouths that we have learned the mysteries of our religion. The stories of Semitic passion surprised, but comforted, Joseph Ravendale, for he could ask himself with genuine earnestness : ' Am I as bad as Abraham or David ? ' Frequently he perused the history of that royal reprobate who seduced the wife of Uriah the Hittite

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and then sent Uriah into the fore-front of the battle to have him killed. But we still sing David's Psalms. Such facts gave him hope. They proved that the net of the Established Religion has meshes wide enough to receive the greatest scoundrels, ancient and modern. After all, Mr. Delmore had died peaceably in his bed ; whereas poor Uriah was murdered. And then Mr. Delmore's debts had been paid by his nuptial successor. Within two years the widow became Mrs. Ravendale. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

We would appear to possess an infinite capacity for justifying our actions on irrelevant pretexts. We throw a pleasing camouflage over our assailable beliefs and actions, and so enable ourselves to retain a facile self-respect. Life, it is sometimes said, is a warfare ; certainly camouflage plays a conspicuous part in both. The grocer justifies his excessive charges on the ground that he too is a victim of profiteering. The immoral man excuses himself on the plea that he is not so immoral as some other person he knows. The robber may even sanctify his robberies, because, says he, they are good for the shopkeepers, or because he takes only from those who can afford to lose. And high financiers, convicted in court of embezzlement and fraud, have been known to find for themselves justification in the innocent remark : ' What have I got out of it ? '

In Brieux's play, *The Red Robe*, there occurs an excellent illustration of the manner in which, to enforce our previously formed beliefs and wishes and satisfy our emotional nature, we may reason

<sup>1</sup> *What lies Beneath*. By Benjamin Swift. London : Chapman & Hall, Ltd. 1917.

irrelevantly, and exaggerate or distort facts, attempting, too, by this means, not only to justify ourselves but to impose our beliefs and wishes on others. When we attempt to persuade others fallaciously, the process is marked by the same working of unconseious and contrary emotions, and by the same superstructure of irrelevant and inconsistent reasoning, as the fallacious persuasion of ourselves. The chief character in Brioux's play is M. Vagret, an advocate in a French court, who desires to be promoted to a town with a Court of Appeal, where he would be Procureur Général and a Councillor, and have the privilege of wearing "the red robe". His wife and daughter, also, moved chiefly by the thought of the increased income and social status that such a position would confer, are eager for his promotion. A man named Etehepare is about to be tried on a charge of murder, and the court-officials are extremely anxious to secure his condemnation—as one of them explains, during the last year 118 years' less imprisonment have been awarded than in the preceding year, and the provincial authorities are beginning to consider the court as wanting in ability and zeal. Thus the sentiments of self-interest and ambition, as well as the pressure of his family, impel Vagret, as one of the advocates for the prosecution, to do his utmost to secure a verdict against the prisoner. He makes an impassioned speech in court, selecting from the evidence of the witnesses only those facts that are favourable to his case, and deliberately ignoring those unfavourable, figuring as "the spokesman of humanity", the promoter of tranquillity and security of life, the guardian of justice, while all

the time he is really animated by other and contrary emotions and sentiments : by regard for his family, by ambition and self-interest, by vanity, professional pride, and the desire to defeat the advocate opposed to him. After the speech has been delivered he becomes conscious of his real motives, and is ultimately constrained to disclose to the court his doubts as to the guilt of the prisoner, who is acquitted. In the following dialogue, which, despite its length, is worthy of being quoted in its entirety, in view of its aptness as an illustration, he speaks to his wife of the unworthy motives by which he had been actuated :—

*“Vagret.—. . . I tell you there is a series of circumstances in the case of which no one has spoken and the nature of which makes me believe in the innocence of the accused—*

*Madame Vagret.—But these circumstances—how was it you knew nothing of them till now ?*

*Vagret (his head drooping).—Do you think I did know nothing of them ?—My God ! Shall I have the courage to tell you everything ?—I am not a bad man, am I ? I wouldn't wish any one to suffer for a fault of mine—But—Oh, I am ashamed to admit it, to say it aloud, even, when I have admitted it to myself !—Well, when I was studying the brief, I had got it so firmly fixed in my mind, to begin with, that Etehepare was a criminal, that, when an argument in his favour presented itself to my mind, I rejected it utterly, shrugging my shoulders.—As for the facts of which I am speaking, and which gave rise to my doubts—at first I simply tried to prove that those facts were false, taking, from the depositions of the witnesses, only that*

which would militate against their truth, and rejecting all the rest, with a terrible simplicity of bad faith.—And in the end, in order to dissipate my last scruples, I told myself, just as you told me : ‘That is the business of the defence ; it isn’t mine !’ Listen, and you’ll see to what point the exercise of the magistrate’s office distorts our natures, makes us unjust and cruel. At first, I had a feeling of delight, when I saw that the President, in his cross-examination, was throwing no light whatever on this series of little facts. It was my profession speaking in me, my profession, do you see ? Oh, what poor creatures we are, what poor creatures !

*Madame Vagret.*—Perhaps the jury won’t find him guilty ?

*Vagret.*—It will find him guilty.

*Madame Vagret.*—Or it may find there are extenuating circumstances——

*Vagret.*—No. I adjured them too earnestly to refuse to do so—I was zealous enough, wasn’t I ? Violent enough ?

*Madame Vagret.*—That’s true.—Why did you make your indictment so passionately ?

*Vagret.*—Ah, why, why ? Long before the hearing of the case it was so clearly understood by everybody that the prisoner was the criminal ! And then it all went to my head, it intoxicated me—the way they talked—I was the spokesman of humanity. I was to reassure the countryside, I was to restore tranquillity to the family, and I don’t know what else ! So then—I felt I must show myself equal to the part entrusted to me.—My first indictment was relatively moderate—But

when I saw the celebrated counsel making the jurymen weep, I thought I was lost ; I felt the verdict would escape me. Contrary to my habit, I replied. When I rose to my feet for the second time I was like a man fighting, who has just had a vision of defeat, and who therefore fights with the strength of despair. From that moment Etchepare, so to speak, no longer existed. I was no longer concerned to defend society or sustain my accusations ; I was contending against the advocate ; it was a trial of orators, a competition of actors ; I had to be the victor at all costs. I had to convince the jury, resume my hold on it, wring from it the double ' yes ' of the verdict. I tell you, Etchepare no longer counted ; it was I who counted, my vanity, my reputation, my honour, my future—It's shameful, I tell you, shameful. At any cost I wanted to prevent the acquittal which I felt was certain. And I was so afraid of not succeeding that I employed every argument, good and bad, even that of representing to the terrified jurymen their own houses in flames, their own flesh and blood murdered. I spoke of the vengeance of God falling on judges without severity. And all this in good faith—or rather unconsciously, in a burst of passion, in an excess of anger against the advocate, whom I hated at that moment with all my might. My success was greater than I hoped ; the jury is ready to obey me ; and I, my dear, I have allowed myself to be congratulated, I have grasped the hands held out to me—that is what it is to be a magistrate ! ”<sup>1</sup>

One of the most common occasions on which we

<sup>1</sup> *The Red Robe*, by Brieux. Translated by A. Bernard Miall. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd, 1916.



employ false reasoning to justify our beliefs and wishes is when we argue that "the end justifies the means." Often people propose to themselves an end that they assert to be desirable and good, or for the benefit of their neighbours, and at the same time seek to realise it by means that will injure others. Thus the citizens of a nation at war, arguing that it is their duty to win at all costs, out of love for their country, may easily persuade themselves that any means of success are justifiable. Referring to the "fanatical spirit of patriotism" with which the German people were imbued, Mr. J. M. de Beaufort, in his book, *Behind the German Veil*, remarks that to them "only the Fatherland counts: you may murder, steal, spy, cheat,—it does not matter if it is for the Fatherland. The end sanctifies all the means".<sup>1</sup>

This theory arises in large measure from the idea that out of evil good may come, that in things evil there is "a soul of good". If we concentrate our thoughts exclusively on that idea, we may plausibly justify to ourselves any evil act. An interesting passage bearing on this point occurs in Mr. Wells' novel, *Mr. Britling Sees it through*. Mr. Britling has been meditating on certain aspects of the great War, and reflects that "most cruelty . . . draws its incentive, however crippled and monstrous the justification may be, from something punitive in man's instinct, something therefore that implies a sense, however misguided, of righteousness and vindication. That factor is present even in spite; when some vile or atrocious thing is done out of envy or malice, that envy and malice

<sup>1</sup> *Behind the German Veil* (Hutchinson).

has in it always—always ?—Yes, always—a genuine condemnation of the hated thing as an unrighteous thing, as an unjust usurpation, as an inexcusable privilege, as a sinful over-confidence”. This general reflection Mr. Britling proceeds to apply to particular acts of cruelty committed by Germany during the War :—“ There was anger in their villainess. These Germans were an unsubtle people, a people, in the worst and best sense of the words, plain and honest ; they were prone to moral indignation ; and moral indignation is the mother of most of the cruelty in the world. They perceived the indolence of the English and Russians, they perceived their disregard of science and system, they could not perceive the longer reach of these greater races, and it seemed to them that the mission of Germany was to chastise and correct this laxity. Surely, they had agreed, God was not on the side of those who kept an untilled field. . . . That, in a sense, is the cause of all this killing. Cruel it is and abominable, yes, but is it altogether cruel ? Hasn’t it, after all, a sort of stupid rightness ? Isn’t it a stupid reaction to an indolence at least equally stupid ? What was this rightness that lurked below cruelty ? What was the inspiration of this pressure of spite, this anger that was aroused by ineffective gentleness and kindness ? Was it indeed an altogether evil thing ; was it not rather an impulse, blind as yet, but in its ultimate quality as good as mercy, greater perhaps in its ultimate values than mercy ? ”

In this passage Mr. Britling, or Mr. Wells, led partly, perhaps, by a desire to do justice to German motives and to find some explanation of cruelty not

inconsistent with the idea of a moral universe, seems to approach the position of justifying and approving acts of cruelty. Is cruelty, he asks, an altogether evil thing? To this question it must be replied that while, *considered in itself*, cruelty is definitely evil, despite this, certain good results may follow it *incidentally*. It is, for instance, an everyday experience that by meeting and combating evil we may correct or remove defects and weaknesses in our own characters—as when Mr. Wells suggests that by resisting German aggression the British people might correct their temperamental tendency to slackness and inefficiency. If, however, we discriminate clearly, the good thus ensuing can be said to proceed from the evil only accidentally and problematically; if we are to speak accurately, we must say that it proceeds not from the evil in itself but from the resistance offered to the evil. To suggest, as Mr. Britling does, that cruelty is “in its ultimate quality as good as mercy” is simply to annul the distinction between good and evil. The fundamental and ultimate quality of an act of cruelty is, and can be, cruelty and nothing else. The results of cruelty, as cruelty, are the physical or the spiritual injury of others: bodily suffering, resentment, anger, grief, emotional disturbances of various kinds, which, considered in themselves, are radically bad. If, as may happen, certain beneficial results follow, they are not inherent in the act of cruelty, but proceed essentially from certain qualities of character, some strain of goodness, in the person or persons acted upon: it is therefore quite problematic, depending on the character of the persons concerned, whether

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any such beneficial results will follow or not. When we say, with reference to any manifestation of evil, such as cruelty, that it has been the cause of good, we speak loosely and inaccurately. Before we can justly postulate one thing as the cause of another we must be able to show that it is the invariable and unconditional antecedent of that other; but, obviously, there are many cases in which cruelty, malice, persecution, slander, or any other evil principle in action, are not followed by any good results. We must here remember, also, that every action affects not only those acted upon, but the doers. The belief that "cruelty is as good as mercy", or "greater in its ultimate qualities than mercy", neglects altogether the effects that evil action produces on the characters of those committing it. Suppose, for example, that an individual has for some reason or other become obnoxious to a group of people who have agreed under certain circumstances to support one another in joint action. They resolve to victimize the obnoxious person and make his life miserable. Their end, they avow, is to punish him for a fault or sin and lead him to amendment, for the good of society; but, for the realisation of their end, they do not scruple to act meanly or cruelly. In a case of this kind, it is clear that if the would-be social reformers, to realise their purpose, act meanly or cruelly, they become, in the act, as bad as, or worse than, the man they set out to reform or punish, and, further, that, in so far as their action perverts and prostitutes their own characters, it is anti-social, so that, in reality, their own conduct is in direct antagonism to their professed end, the

good of society. In such cases, when actions in themselves base or dishonourable are done to realise a supposed good end, the end actually realised is not the good end that had been proposed, but one infected by the evil of the means adopted ; or—to put the same thing in another way—the end which was supposed to be good was in reality bad, or embraced within itself elements of badness, since the end proposed must be viewed as a whole, including necessarily the means employed, which form a part of the whole action.

To understand the fallacy involved in the belief that “the end justifies the means”, we must first form a clear conception of the meaning of the terms “end” and “means”. By the “end” of an action is usually denoted a purpose or idea, not yet realised, existing only in the subject’s mind ; while by the “means” we usually imply the actions that are afterwards done with a view to its realisation. That, however, is a false opposition ; for, in reality, the end to be attained is no less an action than the means, and in each case the conception of the action or actions involved must have existed previously in the doer’s mind. It is obvious, for example, that, if we propose to go into the country for the benefit of our health, and, as a means to enable us to realise our purpose, buy a ticket for Healthville at a railway station, both the primary end, going to the country, and the means adopted, taking out a railway ticket, are alike actions, at first projected in thought, and afterwards realised. Or, again, if a nation at war has taken possession of a conquered country, the primary end of the army of occupation may be to reduce the inhabitants

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to submission; the means employed may be the indiscriminate murdering of civilians, soldiers, women, and children, and the plunder and devastation of their country: here, again, it is clear that both end and means are essentially, and in the same sense of the word, actions. The distinction usually drawn between end and means is, then, fundamentally illusory. There is a difference between them, but it is a difference not between an idea or purpose conceived and an action performed, but rather between part and whole, the means being merely an action or actions that form a part of, or a moment in, the whole deed which constitutes our end or purpose. Now, it will be readily conceded that the whole of anything includes the parts, and that our judgment of the whole must be determined by reference to its parts. If, then, the part deed—that is, the means, be unjust or wicked, its injustice or wickedness cannot but form an essential element of the whole deed. No moral fact in the world is more certain than that, if evil means are employed, the results that follow, the actual end realised, will be evil also. That very common type of persuasion which springs from the idea that the end justifies the means, and that we may do evil that good may ensue, is based on a radical fallacy; and it is of the highest importance to recognise that a bad act can never, in itself, under any circumstances, produce good results, and that in persuading ourselves to the contrary we deceive ourselves grievously. This does not mean, however, that good and evil are absolutely distinct and separate: good is good, and evil is evil, but it is a significant moral fact that each may be

transmuted into the other, both being made of the same stuff of life. In the hope and belief that evil may be transmuted to good lies all the inspiration of the true social reformer.

We have hitherto been concerned, in this chapter, mainly with the emotional contradictions and the intellectual subterfuges and pretexts, the fallacious reasoning, through which the process of persuasion frequently runs to its destined end. But, equally often, we seek to justify our beliefs and wishes through the vagrant and uncontrolled workings of the imagination. The belief or wish having been given beforehand, the imagination sets to work, and, when not controlled or rightly directed, exaggerates, misinterprets, and distorts the most trifling circumstances to make them consistent with the dominant belief.

This process of false imagination is often wholly or for the most part unconscious. When our imaginations concern our own selves, especially—when, for instance, we project, for our inward satisfaction, an image of ourselves as thrice blessed, or thrice cursed, or thrice or fifty-fold anything, as is imagination's lurid way, we are, for the time being, wholly unconscious of the process: to become conscious of it would be at once to realise its absurdity. In one of Mr. J. D. Beresford's novels,<sup>1</sup> the hero, who has literary ambitions, having brooded over his past failures, and pictured himself as certainly gravitating at last "to his proper level, the gutter", and having begun "mentally to write a realistic account of his descent, that ended surprisingly with his resuscitation on the

<sup>1</sup> *The Invisible Event.*

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publication of 'one of the most wonderful pieces of descriptive writing ever given to the world', as an imaginary reviewer of his described the work", suddenly realises the ridiculous tenor of his imaginations: "he got up then, with a sort of vicious determination, and as it was not of the least consequence what he did that morning, abused himself aloud as he dressed.—'Silly, dreaming idiot!' he said brutally".

Sometimes, when our imaginative persuasions concern our relations with others, it is only the hard logic of facts and events, the sharp contact with reality, that reveals to us their vanity. The sad, if trivial, experiences of Mrs. A. and Mrs. B. may be cited to illustrate this point. Mrs. A., a lady of placid disposition, had for some time had in her employment a housemaid, Mary Ann, a slovenly and careless young person, given to playing havoc with the household crockery-ware. The lady, however, was reluctant to dismiss Mary Ann, and, enlisting her imagination on the side of her wishes, which inclined always to the maintenance of the *status quo*, cheerfully concluded, whenever any improvement in the housemaid's work was shown, that all would yet be well, projecting, for her inward satisfaction, the picture of a reformed Mary Ann sweeping and dusting diligently all day and handling the crockery with prudent care. Thus, with the aid of a friendly imagination, she managed to retain Mary Ann's services for quite a long time, until at length the day of the inevitable crash arrived, when most of the pieces in the valuable dinner-set flew with a swoop from the top to the bottom of the kitchen staircase. Mrs. A. then



realised abruptly the vanity of her expectations, and the expensive Mary Ann was dismissed. Just then, as it happened, Mrs. B., a lady living in another part of the town, was looking for a housemaid. For some time previously she had had in her employment a really servicable maid, Sarah Jane, but, being of an excitable disposition, the lady was prone to exaggerate Sarah's occasional failures: when a soup-plate had been broken she conjured up a dreadful picture of a house altogether denuded of crockery, and when a single "follower" called one evening, she imagined that presently a succession of such visitors would have eaten her out of her house and home. Accordingly, Sarah Jane was requested to leave. But when, later in the day of her departure, Mrs. A.'s Mary Ann, that terrific person, duly engaged by the unwary Mrs. B., appeared on the scene, and daily the floors of the house were strewn—"as thick as leaves in Vallombrosa"—with the fragments of broken dishes, Mrs. B., too, began to realise that her imagination had led her astray, and repented, too late, of the self-persuasions that had led her to dismiss the servicable Sarah.

It must be added, however, that the imagination is capable of offering strong resistance to the impact of reality: once, twice, three times, ten times, the folly of our persuasions may be demonstrated to us; and as often we may revert to the same foolish fancies that had misled us previously: of all our faculties, the imagination is perhaps the most pertinaciously gullible. An amusing illustration of this may be quoted from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The heroine, Catherine Mor-

land, has been reading Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, and is, unconsciously to herself, longing to breathe in her own life the atmosphere of mystery and romance. She has been invited to stay with some friends at Northanger Abbey, an old and historic place round which, she decides, the airs of romance needs must blow. In her room, while she is dressing for dinner on the first night of her visit, the first object that strikes her eye is an immense cedar chest—a receptacle of mystery, she rushingly infers. To it, then, she charges, and, having overcome sundry obstacles thoughtfully provided by the novelist to stimulate her (and the reader's) expectations, "her resolute effort threw back the lid, and gave to her astonished eyes the view of—a white cotton counterpane, properly folded, reposing at one end of the chest in undisputed possession". Of course, just at that moment her hostess enters, and "to the rising shame of having harboured for some minutes an absurd expectation, was then added the shame of being caught in so idle a search". But, after dinner, on retiring to her room for the night, perceiving in a corner an old-fashioned black cabinet, she entertains the same curiosity and idle fancies as before, and a similar process of disillusion follows: when at length she has succeeded in opening the last secret drawer of the cabinet, she sees "a roll of paper pushed back into the further part of the cavity, apparently for concealment"—it turns out, however, to be merely an old washing-bill. Again "she felt humbled to the dust. Could not the adventure of the chest have taught her wisdom? A corner of it catching her eye as she lay, seemed to rise up in judgment against her.

Nothing could now be clearer than the absurdity of her recent fancies." For a third time, however, her imagination returns to the charge, full tilt against the dictates of reason and common sense. From a keen (though rather youthful) scrutiny of her host, Catherine comes to the conclusion that his "late" wife is still alive, kept in confinement in a secluded part of the building, and "receiving from the pitiless hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food"! Circumstances lead to an open disclosure of this extraordinary notion, and a humiliating scene of disillusion for Catherine takes place. The novelist's final comment is as follows:—"Nothing could be clearer, than that it had been all a voluntary, self-created delusion, each trifling circumstance receiving importance from an imagination resolved on alarm, and everything forced to bend to one purpose by a mind which, before she entered the Abbey, had been craving to be frightened." Just so, in our own lives, daily, we are led astray by our vain imaginings: influenced by some dominant belief or emotion, suspecting, fearing, hating, loving, we project visions and elaborate fanciful theories based on the misinterpretation, distortion, and exaggeration of the most unimportant and irrelevant circumstances.

And, besides being a fertile source of self-deception, the imagination may be employed in the attempt consciously to deceive others. Cases of this kind figure frequently in the law-courts. The adventurer and the swindler weave their tales, capture the hearts, and, incidentally, the property of their victims, and their inventions may afterwards be exposed before an interested public in

the police-court. The ingenious X. was charged lately with giving false information on a registration form, having claimed to be the son of a Russian prince and heir to the title of Prince Boris Romanoff. On being arrested, X.—so ran the police evidence—“had asserted that he was attached to the Russian Secret Service in London, his father being a British subject, his mother a Russian princess, and he himself, he said, would one day inherit the title of Prince Boris Romanoff. He added that he was a detective in the Secret Service of the Russian embassy in London, that he was organising some raids on Germany, and that he had a lot of ideas and inventions that he proposed shortly to bring before the Government. Later he admitted that there was no truth in this remarkable story. He said that he had told it to a naval man so that it would be conveyed to the owner of the house where he was staying, and so prevent pressure for rent he was owing for his lodgings”. In this instance X. desires to persuade his landlady that he is trustworthy : he therefore invents an elaborate story, and takes steps to have it conveyed to her indirectly—a subtle touch this last, X. being aware that, on occasion, indirect may be much more effective than direct persuasion : his story, remarkable enough to form a topic of discussion among the inmates of the house, and reaching his landlady’s ears through the medium of others, would be less likely to give rise to suspicion than if he had volunteered the information personally.

One of the most common perversions of imagination in written and spoken persuasion consists in the employment of false analogies and baseless

comparisons to support and enforce our contentions. Such analogies are found not only in the exaggerated and highly coloured rhetoric of the tub-thumper, or in the craftily contrived wiles of the sophist, but in the most serious and otherwise sound writings and speeches. An extreme instance of this use of false analogy is to be found in an article entitled "Germany's Passion", by Dr. Preuss of Erlangen, which appeared in a German magazine in September, 1915.<sup>1</sup> The writer's object was to persuade his readers that Germany's sufferings in the war had arisen solely from her steadfast support of the claims of righteousness and truth. To illustrate and support that contention the article compares the countries "responsible for" the "passion" of Germany with the persons who brought about the crucifixion of Christ. Thus the Russian Tzar is depicted as playing "the deplorable part of Pilate", Serbia is the modern equivalent of Barabbas, France is Herod, England the Sanhedrin, and Roumania "the new Judas". The detailed statements put forward to support those comparisons are in the highest degree fantastic, yet they would doubtless carry conviction to many of Dr. Preuss's readers, as (we may perhaps suppose) they had previously convinced Dr. Preuss himself. The chief characteristic of false analogy is that merely superficial and accidental resemblances are treated as if they were fundamental and essential,

<sup>1</sup> For an English translation of the whole article see *Hurrah & Hallelujah: The spirit of New Germanism*. By J. P. Bang, D.D., Professor of Theology at the University of Copenhagen. From the Danish by Jessie Bröchner. Hodder and Stoughton, 1916.

and this is obviously the outstanding feature of Dr. Preuss's article. For instance, to justify the comparison between Judas and Roumania, he asserts that Roumania "betrayed" Germany, the modern counterpart of Christ, not for thirty pieces of silver but "for thirty milliards", and he adds that "the only difference between the old Judas and the new is, that the former went out immediately, while the latter waited three quarters of a year". Arguing on that basis, however, Dr. Preuss might with equal appropriateness have cast Bulgaria, and not Roumania, for the part of Judas, for she, too, covenanted with a strong power for more than thirty pieces of silver; nor did she go out 'immediately', but waited; etc., etc. This kind of writing is as easy as juggling; and bears a similar relation to reality.

Mob-orators and the charlatans of the marketplace commonly seek to inflame the imagination of their audiences, with a view to persuading them to act as they wish. Their speeches are marked by a varied succession of exaggerated and irrelevant images, depicted in crude and glaring colours, and having no essential connection either with one another or with the subject-matter of their discourse: the end to be attained is, not right persuasion, but the exploitation of the multitude. More often, however, the exaggerations and distortions of imagination are employed, not as a deliberate means of exploitation, but unconsciously: as when M. Vagret, in the passage quoted above from *The Red Robe*, acting, as he himself says, "with a terrible simplicity of bad faith", represents "to the terrified jurymen their own

houses in flames, their own flesh and blood murdered", so that they may be persuaded to condemn the prisoner.

The various examples of false persuasion that have been cited in this chapter illustrate the fact that in persuading ourselves and others we are often led astray by contrary emotions, fallacious reasoning, and erratic processes of the imagination, intermingled with and assisting one another.

Our examples indicate, also, that false persuasion tends to run in secret channels. In many cases we are quite unconscious of the real motives that underlie our persuasions, and when we are conscious of them, they may be of such a kind as, in the common phrase, not to bear thinking about, much less speaking about—it is then that reasoning and imagination come to our aid, and enable us to conceal our real motives under a superstructure of irrelevant and specious argument coloured attractively by the imagination. We could not, any of us, without shame, give open utterance at all times to the selfish and contradictory emotions, the vain imaginations, or the fallacious pleas and excuses that misdirect our persuasions and serve as justification for our conduct.

And when persuasion thus runs in secret channels, the actions that it prompts are apt to be secret also. When people are influenced by motives that they may not declare openly, or that they will not confess even to themselves, their actions, especially towards others, and if they are opposed to the prevailing standards of right and wrong, are likely to be marked by a corresponding secrecy, sometimes spreading into an elaborate network of deception

and intrigue. In a novel by Miss Violet Hunt,<sup>1</sup> we are shown how Christina Radmall, who wants to get married, but thinks that her chances are prejudiced by her exceptionally youthful appearance and by the fact that her sister Virgilia, who is really younger, looks older than she does, enters on a campaign of intrigue against her sister. The motive underlying her action is "a blind fury of self-preservation", but it lies concealed both from herself and others, though not altogether so, beneath the superstructure of fallacious argument that persuasion usually raises in such cases. "She embarked", says the novelist, "on a crusade to keep Virgilia back and down. She used her influence with Mrs. Radmall to nip in the bud every progressive instinct, every movement of natural growth in her younger sister. And Virgilia knew it. She knew better what Christina was about than Christina herself, possessed as she was by a blind fury of self-preservation. And it was useless. Other people, even the hirelings of the house, helped to fight against the peculiar form of oppression instituted by the elder sister against the younger. Their sense of fairness was outraged by the spider net of intrigue which the cunning adolescent was weaving by means of her power over a partial mother. Christina overlooked no detail by which her sister's grudging but inevitable advance to full social rights could be arrested. She put it into Mrs. Radmall's head that smart American girls wore their frocks quite short until they were

<sup>1</sup> *Their Lives*. By Violet Hunt. London: Stanley Paul & Co. 1916,



actually 'out' and large black bows in their hair instead of putting it up".

Forewarned is forearmed, and the quick-witted Virgilia, who had divined Christina's amiable intentions, contrives, after all, to arrive first in the marriage-race. On the day before that fixed for the wedding, however, news is received of the death of a relative, and it looks as if the ceremony will have to be deferred. But Virgilia resolves that there shall be no postponement, and now in her turn applies her wits to the elaboration of devices by which her wish may be realised. She urges that there is no time to make the necessary arrangements for postponement, that she cannot be expected to grieve much for the death of a relative she has never seen, that presents have been sent, servants engaged, people asked, etc., etc. Mrs. Radmall concurs, the real motive of her agreement being the feeling that "nothing in the world of morals and sentiment must be allowed to interfere with the speedy withdrawal of Virgilia", who is not a favourite in the family, while she justifies her assent explicitly on the ground that "she owed it to her husband, to her daughter whose career was just beginning, not to make a fuss and spoil everything for the sake of her own feelings". To prevent misconception, however, on the part of the wicked world, Mrs. Radmall, prompted by Virgilia, admits that the situation must be handled tactfully, or—tactically; certain little private arrangements must be made. "Drilled by Virgilia, Mrs. Radmall had agreed not to tell Papa, and to keep the news from everybody, including Trimmer and Grace, until the wedding was over. Then a little juggling with dates

must be perpetrated. Colour must be given to the theory that the telegram (unproduced) had been delayed. Aunt Philippa was not to be written to for twenty-four hours—It had all been arranged.”

The wanderings of persuasion find an outlet on each of its three sides : on its emotional side, on its imaginative side, and on its intellectual side. To satisfy the instincts, emotions, sentiments, or passions that rule our persuasions, we often reason falsely and imagine vain things, and often, too, we seek to realise our beliefs or wishes by secret methods of impression and intrigue. We have hitherto considered those tendencies only as they express themselves in individuals ; but they work, also, collectively, and, when they so work, appearing in large or influential groups of people united by a common interest, they modify the lives of communities profoundly. In the following chapter an attempt will be made to show how the pressure of groups, labouring to attain their ends, and to preserve and increase their power and exclusive privileges, expresses itself in the same process of false persuasion as that which we have noted in individuals, marked by intellectual, emotional, and imaginative deception, and by the widespread use of cunningly devised methods of impression and exploitation, affecting perniciously every aspect of social life.

### CHAPTER III

## GROUP PRESSURE AND THE SENSE OF POWER—METHODS OF IMPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION



## CHAPTER III

### GROUP PRESSURE AND THE SENSE OF POWER—METHODS OF IMPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION

**A**T no previous period of the world's history has the human tendency to associate in groups been so marked as it is at present, and for this reason the influence exercised by group-pressure on men's persuasions has never before been so widely and deeply operant. In every aspect of life evidences of the increasing tendency towards group-effort may be observed. It exhibits itself even in the domestic arrangements of our homes : the old conception of the Englishman's house as his castle, where he could segregate himself at will, has become modified : many people in large towns have given up the separate houses that they formerly occupied, and live in blocks of flats with public restaurants ; and communal kitchens, the notion of which would once have been repugnant to Englishmen, are now widely patronised. In commerce, again, the co-operative movement has made great progress, big firms tending to monopolise trade, while the ' small shopkeeper ' complains that he is being ' pushed out.' The large banks are amalga-

mating so that they may become larger ; newspaper ' combines ' wield immense power ; and in recent years the most important feature in the development of our industrial life has been the rapid growth of trades-unions and employers' associations. The professions, too, are organised, and each has its own association to protect its interests. Religious sectarianism, or combination within separate groups or churches, is still strong ; and in politics, in this country, the party system, or government by the group that is represented by a clear majority in the House of Commons, has prevailed since the days of Queen Anne, while in all countries the effective governing power has always tended to remain in the hands of a small number of men, belonging to a special class, whose prestige, derived from family influence or from ability and character, has enabled them to gain and retain power.

That the loyal co-operation of individuals within a group is calculated to gain the immediate ends in view cannot be doubted. It makes for practical efficiency. Whether its results will be good or evil depends entirely on the nature of the ends sought and the means employed to realise them. Of co-operation as a mighty influence for good more will be said later ; in this chapter we shall deal mainly with the evil influence that it frequently exercises in the form of organised group-pressure.

The tendency of man to associate in groups is closely connected with the quality of suggestibility : the capacity that we all possess of accepting beliefs without any rational demonstration of their truth, because they are held, or have been held, by other people. It is man's innate tendency to suggesti-

bility that makes social life possible. And this quality operates fundamentally, also, in the process of persuasion : in the first place, it dictates to a large extent the beliefs from which the process starts, while those beliefs, with their underlying emotions, may dominate absolutely the course that the process follows ; and, in the second place, it is mainly on this quality that the speaker or the writer who aims at persuading others relies to enable him to attain his end. The potency of suggestion varies according to the individual, and women are supposed to be, in general, more suggestible than men ; but it holds sway over us all, in every individual, and at all places and times. Its power is, however, most strikingly exhibited when people are gathered in crowds. Then the art of suggestion may be employed with immediate or startling effect, and the orator and the demagogue find their profit therein : men's natural kinship declares itself, and they are moved, often impulsively and irrationally, to common action. Similarly, the power of suggestion over an individual may be especially strong if he belongs to a particular group having for its aim the promotion of certain interests or supposed interests. In such cases, supported by the opinions of their fellows and by the power behind an organised combination of forces, buoyed by the atmosphere of suggestion that sustains all collective effort, men may easily persuade themselves wrongly : specious arguments, and irrelevant appeals to imagination and emotion, may readily be enlisted in the service of the desired end, any argument, and any appeal, being considered valuable if only it seems likely to promote the realisation of the end. The

members of a group are united by the bond of a common object to which great importance is attached, and their loyalty as members is proportionate to the thoroughness with which they identify themselves with it. Under those circumstances, it is obvious that there will be a natural human tendency, greatly augmented by the force of suggestion, to reject as of no value any considerations unfavourable to the interests of the group, and to emphasise unduly, as of great value, all favourable considerations.

It is difficult, or impossible, for the members of a group, who are pledged to afford one another mutual support, to exercise complete independence of judgment, or to resist the opinions of the majority. An individual member who persists in acting contrary to the opinions or mode of action dictated by his group is liable to be ejected therefrom, and so to lose the comfort and support, and the material advantages, conferred by his membership. Thus the professions of medicine and law, which are practically close corporations, have each its own "etiquette," its system of rules, forming a kind of written or unwritten law which all the members are pledged to obey; and those who choose not to conform to the prescribed code, ceasing to be recognised as members of the profession, may lose their means of livelihood—a serious consequence, tending to induce members, even if they should disagree absolutely with certain of the prescribed usages, to waive their disagreement, and conform.

Suggestibility may play its part here also, and encourage the members of a group to abandon, or refrain from stating, their private beliefs. Suppose,



for instance, that the activities of a group involve the employment of secret methods of impression, and that the opinions and feelings of some member are wholly opposed to such action : so compelling is the force of suggestion that, meeting his fellow-members frequently and coming under their influence, he will be apt presently to fall into line with them, and end by approving the plans that originally he had condemned. And in this change of front, even if there might still survive in his mind some feeling of repugnance to the methods employed, he would readily be assisted by the specious reflection that, at any rate, he was acting for the support and protection of his fellow members. As we have noted in the preceding chapter, the belief that "the end justifies the means" often serves to justify unscrupulous conduct, not only in groups, but in individuals : on that ground, for instance, Napoleon's arbitrary acts have often been defended. We have already examined this principle, and found it to be radically fallacious. It often serves merely as an excuse to enable people to satisfy their desire for power, or their instincts of cruelty and revenge, under a specious appearance of altruism.

Suggestion may work in a group through any of the emotions, and sometimes it works through fear : it may happen that the members of a group are positively afraid to commit any action that might seem antagonistic to the general group-principles. This is especially likely to be the case if secret methods of impression or punishment are employed by the group. Mr. J. M. de Beaufort, in *Behind the German Veil*, remarks that there is no cause for

wonder in the fact that the Germans were afraid of one another, for even before the war they spent £4,000,000 a year on their spy system ; and he adds that the employment of secret methods had bred in them a kind of subtle reliance on co-operation, quite opposed to freedom of action and personal courage—the single-handed German would adventure little, but joined (and watched) by his fellows he would dare almost anything.

The persuasions of those who have been caught fast in the machinery of a system are almost of necessity stereotyped, and, in some instances, to attempt to escape from the controlling machinery would be even dangerous. There is evidence that at the beginning of the War many of the German soldiers shrank from committing the cruelties and barbarities enjoined on them by the policy of “frightfulness”, but were constrained to obey, as men inextricably involved in the machinery of a powerful system.

One of the main characteristics of groups is that they are powerful : from that circumstance, partly, they originate. Most individuals, as individuals, possess but small power to impose their ideas and will on others ; but as members of a group they share a common strength. The desire for power is almost universal ; and, when once power has been acquired, it is not relinquished willingly. As members of a group, many people who, of themselves, in virtue of their own qualities or capabilities, could never hope to exercise any considerable influence on the opinions and lives of others, are enabled to experience the sense of power, and find it precious—perhaps the more precious in precise proportion

to the narrowness of their limitations individually ; yet the most gifted of mortals, too, enjoy, and may be corrupted by, the sense of power, for, as Landor says in one of his *Imaginary Conversations*,<sup>1</sup> “ even the wise become as the unwise in the enchanted chambers of Power, whose lamps make every face of the same colour ”.

In itself, of course, power is to be considered as neither good nor bad : its goodness or badness depends on the manner of its use, on the point of view from which it is regarded ; it should be regarded as a means only, not as an end. The corrupting influence of power is due to the fact that, even if at first it may be desired only as a means to the attainment of certain ends, it is apt to become an end valued for its own sake. When once that frame of mind has imposed itself on us, we may easily persuade ourselves that any conduct tending to challenge or diminish our power is wrong, and that any conduct tending to confirm or increase it is right ; when once power has been accepted as an end, there are no restraints capable of preventing men from acting solely as their own convenience or supposed interests direct. And since, in a sense, the exercise of power, in one form or another, may be regarded as the main object of groups, their persuasions are especially liable to be thus tainted. The members of a group, imagining, perhaps, that they are animated by the purest motives, by desire for the well-being of others, while in reality they are prompted merely by the desire to have and hold power, are under a special temptation to act arbitrarily, unjustly, or tyrannically. Their opponents, and even all those outside

<sup>1</sup> “ Demosthenes and Eubulides.”

of the group, whether they show opposition to it or not, are apt to be regarded as enemies, not as a result of any rational consideration of questions at issue, but simply because their opinions and actions do not explicitly favour, or are positively unfavourable to, the opinions of the group and the maintenance of its power. On this point some apposite remarks of W. S. Landor may again be quoted. "There is a great deal less of bigotry in the world", he says, "than is generally supposed, and a great deal more insincerity. Our faith is of little moment to those who declaim against it. They are angry, not at our blindness, but that the blind will trust his own dog and staff rather than theirs; and, what is worse, that he will carry the scrip. This is wilfulness: they would fain open his eyes to save him from the sin of it; and they break one or two bones because he will not take them for his oculists".<sup>1</sup> In powerful organised groups, which possess more facilities than the ordinary individual for the breaking of one or two bones, and which may plausibly cloak their real motives under high-sounding phrases, avouching as their aim the moral reform of others, the amelioration of social conditions or the good of humanity, etc., etc., this common human tendency to administer eye-openers may become very marked and very pernicious. In all groups there is some exclusive principle at work, and for this reason they tend to become militant, and to assume a more or less hostile attitude towards all those outside of them. This trait is sometimes amusingly exhibited in a small way in families: have we not all met the agreeable old lady, mother

<sup>1</sup> *Imaginary Conversations*—"Washington & Franklin".

of a large family, most respectable of matrons, who regards the world outside of her own immediate relatives as being hardly able to justify its existence, and assumes a kind of superior or aggressive air towards all outside the sacred family-fold ?

To maintain their power, groups must of necessity be organised ; and the complexity and the rigidity of their organisation are in proportion to the number of their members and to the degree of power at which they aim. A great deal has been said and written of late concerning the need for a more thorough organisation of our national activities : in this respect, at the beginning of the War, the Britisher was constantly being advised that he would do well to borrow a leaf from the German book of life. Considered from some points of view, however, the capacity for organisation would seem to be a singularly unattractive feature of human nature : most of us, for instance, in recent years, have come to consider the Germans as quite unattractive beings. The kingdom of the innocent and unsuspecting, one imagines, if it existed anywhere, would exhibit no desire for, and experience no need of, organised systems and rigid rules of life. Children have no organising powers ; many women, on the other hand, are excellent organisers, and enjoy managing others. But thus airily to condemn organisation as a thing in itself undesirable or harmful would, of course, be unpractical and absurd ; in itself, it is neither good nor evil, its ethical quality depending on the purposes for which it is employed. Nevertheless, we may say truly that in every complex organisation the seeds of degeneration are latent, and may produce a rank growth. When,

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as frequently happens, a stereotyped and rigid system of rules is evolved, and is imposed on a number of individuals irrespectively of their differences, in a manner hostile to the development of personality, organisation becomes a mere mechanism: being then a force imposed on individuals from without, having no root in their essential nature, and taking no account of their particular modes of thought and feeling, it ceases to be really organisation: its organic quality disappears. This is especially liable to happen in the management of groups, and it happens always when organisation aims at the maintenance and development of power as an end in itself.

Power is wielded most easily, rapidly, and effectively, by an authority which does not require to consider the needs of individuals, which, confident in its strength, is under no necessity to wait to obtain the consent or the conscious and willing co-operation of others, which can treat men as machines, not as human beings, and exact from them a mechanical and sure response.

And, when organisation is thus employed for the sake of power, its modes of operation are apt to be secret and devious. Men may be, and are, exploited so that the powerful may retain their power, but, if the exploitation is to be quite successful, it must not be open and manifest. And secrecy in action is always accompanied by irresponsibility on the part of the actors. The work of a group is often carried on anonymously and impersonally, through an organisation framed essentially with a view to satisfying the sense of power; its instigators and managers, as well as the ordinary members, are

responsible to no one outside of the group itself—they are in the same position, from a moral point of view, as an individual who works secretly to obtain power for himself, and is irresponsible because no one else is supposed to know, or is in a position openly to object to, what he is doing. For this reason members of groups which combine great power with secrecy of action and immunity from external criticism are very apt to be animated by interested or bad motives, while at the same time, deriving countenance and support from one another, and arguing that in all they do they are working for the benefit of their group, they may plausibly persuade themselves that their motives are pure and good.

In the sphere of religion, the interested persuasions of groups—cliques of priests and politicians and rulers—have frequently appeared in action in the form of persecution. In its essence, all religious persecution is simply the effort of a ruling and established group to crush elements that are hostile to the maintenance of its power. An obvious instance of this is the persecution of Jesus and his followers. The power of the Sanhedrin and of the Pharisees and Sadducees was threatened by his teaching: they therefore conspired to entrap him by every possible means, lying in wait for him, misinterpreting his words and actions, and using their influence with the established political authorities to bring about his downfall. Ultimately, by those means, and taking advantage of Judas's treachery, they procured his death. After the Crucifixion, the doctrines of Christianity became more and more prevalent and threatened both the worship of the old gods

and the religious status of the Emperors : there then ensued the persecution and wholesale massacre of the early Christians.

The kind of persuasion that is employed by the priests of established religions to preserve their power unimpaired in the face of newer forces of enlightenment is well illustrated in Brieux's play, *False Gods*.<sup>1</sup> The principal character in the play is Satni, a young priest who has recognised the fact that the worship of the old gods of Egypt had been upheld by the political rulers, working through all kinds of deception and trickery, merely as a means of keeping the people in subjection. Once a year, on an important feast-day, the god miraculously bows his head in the temple, as a token of his intention to bless the people in their labours. Satni declares that he will prevent the miracle, which he knows is done by a mechanical contrivance of the priests. Every effort is made to deter him from his purpose. The High Priest, in a long interview with Satni, urges all the arguments that have been employed by priests throughout the ages to secure conformity and prevent secession. Since he is speaking to one initiated in the "mysteries", he admits that the people are deceived, but, he adds, the deception is justifiable, nay, meritorious. "We give to a people the gods they can understand . . . there is no happiness for the lower orders without religion. . . . If you take away their religion, what will make them virtuous? . . . Religion is a prop. It soothes—consoles. He does evil who disturbs it". Satni's teaching, he points out, has already led to disorder

<sup>1</sup> Translated by J. F. Fagan. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd. 1916.



among the people, to riots, robbery and murder. He appeals, too, to Satni's self-interest, promising his promotion to the highest order of priesthood if only he will declare himself to have erred, and avow publicly his restored belief in the gods. On Satni's more intimate personal feelings, too, he seeks to play: Yaruma, whom Satni loves, has been chosen as a victim by the god, to be sacrificed on the approaching feast-day: "she may be saved from the sacrifice, if she become the wife of a priest." By such reasonings, which are really prompted by the desire to have and hold power, and have no bearing on the rightness or wrongness of Satni's teaching, and by threatening to employ against him all the weapons that the members of an organised and established group possess, the High Priest attempts to dissuade his former subordinate from the proposed action.

In the sphere of politics, especially in its military aspects, it has been left to our own time to furnish what may well be termed the most portentous illustration that has ever been witnessed of false group-persuasion. The policy and actions of the ruling class and militarist clique in Germany before and during the War embodied in a striking manner all the degenerate characteristics of group-pressure that have been mentioned above. Those characteristics appeared, in the first place, in the exploitation for the purposes of the ruling group, of the German people themselves, and, in the second place, in the policy and attitude of the group and its agents, the German people, towards other nations.

The most powerful engine that can be employed in the exploitation of others is organisation; and

no nation has ever been so systematically organised, so closely moulded in every detail to the fashion of its rulers' will, as Germany was before and during the War. The process began in the schools, which were mobilised as a means of impressing and exploiting the susceptible minds of the young in the interests of the established political authority. Independence of thought and character was thus stifled at the very outset, and later the same result was secured by the rigid regulation of social life in all its aspects. Many of the German laws that were so much admired by other nations, though ostensibly made for the protection of the people, were in reality merely measures skilfully devised to bind abject subjects to the chariot-wheels of their masters. Autocratic rule is, of necessity, unfavourable to freedom of thought, or to free creative effort of any kind; when the spirit of absolutism is at work, its inevitable results are the elimination of individual effort and personal leadership, and the standardisation of human beings. For the standardisation of the German people, one of the chief methods employed by the autocracy was the "Rat" system, an elaborately organised and graded scheme having for its object the classification of the people in various degrees of merit recognised by the State. Mr. James W. Gerard gives an amusing account of this system in his book, *My Four Years in Germany*.<sup>1</sup> "Rat", he explains, "means councillor, and is a title of honour given to any one who has attained a certain measure of success or standing in his chosen business

<sup>1</sup> *My Four Years in Germany*. By James W. Gerard, late United States Ambassador in Berlin. Hodder and Stoughton.

or profession. For instance, a business man is made a commerce "rat", a lawyer a justice "rat", an architect or builder a building "rat", a keeper of the archives an archive "rat", and so on. The "rats" are created in this way:—First a man becomes a plain "rat", then later on he becomes a "secret rat", or privy councillor, still later a "court secret rat" and still later a "wirklicher", or "really truly secret court rat". . . . "Now if a lawyer (for instance) gets to be about forty years old and is not some sort of rat, his wife begins to nag him, and his friends and relations look at him with suspicion. There must be something in his life which prevents his obtaining the coveted distinction, and if there is anything in a man's past, if he has shown at any time any spirit of opposition to the Government, as disclosed by the police registers, which are kept written up to date about every German citizen, then he has no chance of obtaining any of these distinctions, which make up so much of the social life of Germany. It is a means by which the Government keeps a far tighter hold on the intellectual part of its population than if they were threatened with torture and the stake. Those Social Democrats who have declared themselves against the existing system of government and in favour of a republic, can, of course, receive no distinctions from the Government, because they dared to lift their voices and their pens in criticism of the existing order. For them there is the fear of the law. Convictions for the crime of *Lèse-Majesté* are of almost daily occurrence".

This passage is of interest as illustrating not only how organisation may be employed as a means of

exploitation, but also how, within every group that is animated by an overweening desire for power and employs secret methods of impression, there always exist two classes : the exploiters and the exploited. The moving spirits in such a group exploit the ordinary members, whom they use as their agents in still wider fields of exploitation, seeking by every available means of organisation to make them obedient tools ; and as long as the ordinary members believe that the methods employed really make their group more powerful, and that they themselves derive material or moral benefit therefrom, most of them readily acquiesce even in their own exploitation. It is only when such a group fails in its purposes that rebellion breaks out among its members. During the War many people were inclined to distinguish sharply between Germany and its rulers : the German people, they maintained, were no less the victims of autoeracy and militarism than overrun Belgium or Serbia. But this view of the situation wholly overlooks the fact that the German people had willingly lent themselves to, and identified themselves with, the purposes of their organisers : they, too, cherished ideals of conquest and power, and were prepared to employ any means, however unscrupulous, that seemed likely to lead to the attainment of their end.

The same perversion of organisation with a view to the possession of power, the same strain of secret dealing, the same methods of exploitation reaching out to influence and control the lives of others by underhand means, that marked the attitude of the militarist clique towards the German people, for many years also marked its policy towards other

nations. All the speeches delivered by President Wilson during the War show an unerring sense of this fact. In his famous Speech to Congress on April 3, 1917, speaking of the origin of the War, he said :—" It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in old unhappy days, when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interest of dynasties, or little groups of ambitious men, who were accustomed to use their fellow-men as pawns and tools. Self-governed nations do not fill their neighbour States with spies or set in course an intrigue to bring about an opportunity to strike and make a conquest. Such designs can be successfully worked only under cover where no one has a right to ask questions. Cunningly contrived plans of deception or impression, carried, it may be, from generation to generation, can be worked out and kept from light only within the privacy of Courts, or behind the carefully guarded confidences of a privileged class. . . . One of the things that has convinced us that Prussian autocracy was not, and could never be, our friend is that, from the very outset of the present war, it filled our unsuspecting communities, and even our offices of government, with spies, and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot against our national unity of council and our peace within and without our industries and commerce." In view of the extent to which German intrigue had spread in the United States, large sums of money having been sent to procure a favourable propaganda in the newspapers, to engineer trouble in Mexico, even to bribe the members of the Senate itself, it is no wonder that a prominent American

newspaper remarked that "the business of a German diplomat, his chief occupation, is to intrigue against the government which receives him in the interest of the country which sends him. . . . German diplomacy has borrowed the methods of the Mafia and covered them with the uniform of diplomacy. It has stolen the historic procedure of the highwayman and sought to transform it by decoration bestowed by the Kaiser himself".<sup>1</sup> And the employment of those methods by Germany did not date merely from the beginning of the War. There is evidence that for a long time previously her political rulers had actively identified themselves with a policy of commercial expansion abroad which was incompatible with the economic development of the world as a whole, which aimed not merely at employing money profitably in countries where capital was relatively scarce,—a perfectly legitimate object,—but at gaining an undue political control over the lives of other nations.

To those aggressive tendencies the name of "Prussianism" has been given. In the War we fought against Prussianism, and won. Nevertheless, if we look around us at the activities of certain groups in our own country, or examine our own national institutions, it cannot but be admitted that the same tendencies of false group-persuasion, appearing in other forms, have exercised, and exercise, a powerful and pernicious influence over the lives of people in this country also. This need not surprise us, in view of what has been written above : what we call "Prussianism" is nothing more nor less than false group-persuasion, a phenomenon

<sup>1</sup> *New York Tribune*, Oct. 1917.

peculiar to no one country, but common. In Prussianism, however, its developments reached extreme limits, and assumed the form of "militarism", the issues of which are more serious, more portentous, more terrible in the life of man than those that follow from false group-persuasion applied in other directions or with other specialised motives. But the working of false group-persuasion may be traced everywhere, in all civilised countries and in every aspect of corporate life: whenever we find men labouring to gain privileges and power, of any kind, for the benefit not of all but of some particular group, whether its aims be political, social, economic, religious, legal, or military, there, essentially, we find Prussianism. In the economic and political life of our own country, for instance, we may find ample illustration of this fact.

It is a matter of common knowledge that since the time of the industrial revolution the economic system of this country has been organised and directed, mainly, by groups of capitalists, whose paramount aim has been the accumulation of wealth. So far as the working classes have been concerned, the main result of that system, in the past, has been their partial or complete exploitation for the benefit of the masters. The chief aim of those controlling the economic system having been the accumulation of wealth, and the retention of economic power in their own hands, the ideal that they have constantly kept in view is productivity, the production of wealth in ever-increasing quantities—an ideal that leads naturally to the treatment of the worker as an automaton, a hand, a tool, to be used, not as an individual with a personality of his own, and as

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such possessing certain rights, but merely as a means of production. Industry has therefore become more and more minutely and rigidly organised in all its details. That the output may be increased, each worker is allotted his particular task, which is concerned often with some very minute portion of the complete product: his work may be to hammer so many rivets in an hour or a day, or to produce some small part of an intricate machine, so that he cannot be expected to take any comprehensive interest or pride in the complete production, or in the basic idea of the industry that forms his daily occupation. To this automatization of the worker the perfection to which machinery has been brought has largely contributed. The controllers of industry, in the past, have justified their proceedings, their disregard of the personality of the workers, by every kind of arbitrary persuasion: since economic power, the end that they have had in view, cannot be achieved or maintained except through quantity of production, any means that will increase productivity may justifiably be employed, and there is no exploitation of the workers, they have argued to themselves, which cannot be reasonably compensated by an increase of pay—the said increase, however, having been forthcoming, generally, only when some irresistible pressure has been brought to bear upon them. Only within recent times has that pressure been exercised effectively. There are many evidences to-day that a reaction against the forces of capitalism has not only begun, but is in full swing. The capitalists, indeed, have had a long innings, but the workers' turn has now come, and it would appear as if they were likely to knock up a big score.



Unfortunately, however, their play is marked by precisely the same tendencies as that of the other side. The same characteristics of false group-persuasion that have appeared in the actions of the capitalists appear now, in their turn, in the attitude and the organisation of the workers : narrowness and selfishness of outlook, it must be conceded, is not confined to the capitalist groups. That this should be so is almost inevitable. Evil infects everything that it touches, and spreads in ever widening circles. Thus hypocrisy begets hypocrisy : when we meet any one whom we know to be engaged in some plan of secret impression or exploitation, it is, as a rule, impossible to express our knowledge openly : the hypocrite has only to say that we are labouring under a delusion, and, if his plans have been laid effectively, we stand silenced, if not confuted—he thus imposes on us a kind of conforming and passive hypocrisy, not intentional, or meant to deceive, but for that very reason galling. Similarly, many of the methods of German militarism, after the outbreak of War, were imposed upon the people of almost every country in Europe : we ourselves, in this country, were driven to adopt conscription, and many of the details of our lives are now organised and ordered for us by officials in a way that, before the War, would have been resented by every Britisher. So, too, confronted by capitalist methods of exploitation, the workers felt themselves impelled to employ similar methods. Their group-organisations work, not for the good of the community, but to further their own exclusive interests. To gain economic power, which is their end, any means, however hostile to personality, may, they consider,

be justly employed, if only they are successful. Every worker must be a member of a trades-union, whether he wishes to or not : corresponding to the system of conscription by which militarism seeks to attain its ends, there must be a universal levy of the workers, who must conform to a kind of military discipline, and obey all the orders of their union unquestioningly, whatever their individual opinions may be. ' Blacklegs ' may be victimised, and, just as militarist groups, having made a treaty with other groups, consider themselves justified in breaking it whenever their interests encourage them to do so, so too, in the sphere of industry, agreements are made between workers and employers and afterwards disregarded. Thus some of the methods of German militarism, of which the leaders of Labour have expressed their abhorrence, are practised even by their own organisations. Up to the present time, the ultimate appeal, in any contest for power, has always been, in some form or other, force. As long as this state of affairs continues, men will be able to justify plausibly any action, however unscrupulous or dishonourable, which serves their immediate interests. If the opposing forces are for the moment too strong for them, they make a treaty, or sign an agreement, favourable to their opponents, but, they will argue, they do so compelled by *force majeure*, and, as soon as they are in a position to do so, they will break their promises without hesitation or scruple—as their opponents, in the day of their power, had dealt with them, so will they deal with their opponents.

In politics, the more ignoble aspects of group-pressure have been prominently displayed in this

country for generations and centuries, ever since the introduction of the party system. In the reign of George II, when the Whigs possessed a monopoly of power, they kept themselves in office by an extensive system of bribery and borough-jobbing; and in the reign of George III corruption was even more rife: "the royal revenue", says J. R. Green, "was employed to buy seats and to buy votes. Day by day George himself scrutinized the voting-list of the two houses, and distributed rewards and punishments as members voted according to his will or no. Promotion in the civil service, preferment in the Church, rank in the army, was reserved for 'the King's friends'. Pensions and court places were used to influence debates. Bribery was employed on a scale never known before".<sup>1</sup>

The politics of to-day are purer; yet who could assert that the methods employed by the Whigs in the reigns of the early Georges are altogether obsolete? The political parties still have their secret funds, on which they draw to make propaganda and maintain their exclusive interests, the contributors being rewarded, in many cases, by a knighthood, peerage, or other title, according to the extent of their donations. We may smile at the distinctions and artificialities of the German "rat" system; but our own system of titles and honours, in view of the fact that it has been employed mainly as an instrument to uphold the exclusive interests of powerful groups, and that titles are frequently conferred, not for real merit or for services performed in the interests of all, but for subservience to the interests of those established in power, is little less

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of the English People.*

absurd and pernicious. In recent years a profound distrust of the methods of politicians has arisen, simply because they have been employed primarily in the interests, not of the State, but of the parties. The events of the War, no doubt, modified to a large extent the working of the party system: when the affairs of the country are in a critical state, it is realised that the exclusive interests of the political parties are of comparatively small importance, and that those entrusted with the guidance of affairs must act for the good of the nation as a whole. But even during the War some of the methods of impression and exploitation that not infrequently characterise political group-persuasion kept cropping out from time to time.

On more than one occasion, for instance, leading politicians were accused of trying to gain their ends by a secret collaboration with a section of the Press—a practice that was quite common in autocratic Germany. It was generally recognised in this country that such intrigue, besides being discreditable in itself, was likely to be, in its effects, damaging to the vital interests of the nation; and an animated debate on the subject took place in the House of Commons in February, 1917, on the occasion of Sir William Robertson's resignation from the post of Chief of the General Staff. Mr. Austen Chamberlain expressed the predominating feeling of the House when he said that "what was at the root of half the anxiety and uncertainty and disturbances of the last week was the fact that the functions of the Press and the functions of Government were being exercised by the same persons. Three great newspaper owners were members of, or were

intimately associated with, the Administration. The Prime Minister and the Government had surrounded themselves, quite unnecessarily, with an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, because they had allowed themselves to become so intimately associated with these great newspaper proprietors. The Government would never rid themselves of these suspicions until they severed that connection with the Press ”.

In this country distrust of political methods has been felt perhaps most specifically and acutely in relation to the management of foreign affairs, and especially in relation to the question of secret diplomacy. In dealing with other nations, our Foreign Secretary has, in the past, possessed almost unlimited power, Parliament itself exercising no control. Our diplomatic agents, too, have been selected almost exclusively from a particular class ; and there has therefore been a natural tendency on the part of that class so to manage affairs that control should be retained in their own hands : this circumstance, more than any other, has led to the maintenance of the traditional practice of secret diplomacy. There is now, however, a growing feeling that foreign relations should be debated more openly in Parliament, and that the public should be better informed regarding them. The traditional policy is defended on the ground that great caution and reticence should be exercised in the management of foreign affairs. On a recent occasion Mr. Balfour remarked that “ even in the sphere of private life, without caution and reticence domestic life would be impossible . . . there was in the public mind a profound illusion as to this so-called secret diplomacy.

Secret diplomacy was not a criminal operation to cover up some wrong-doing, but was merely an extension of the rules which applied in private life to the relations between nations". To this it may be replied that family life marked by such reticence and incommunicativeness as has prevailed in the conduct of our foreign policy inevitably becomes narrow and warped : each member of the family then pursues his own course without regard to the others, and the reticence which marks their mutual relations soon degenerates into positive hostility. As in family, so in political, life, the surest way to create a healthy atmosphere, and to induce the effective co-operation of each in the interests of all, is by the free and open discussion of all common interests.

A great deal is now being said and written on the subject of " reconstruction "—this word sounds the keynote of practically all our present discussions of political, social, and economic questions : a new era, it is supposed, is about to dawn, in which the mistakes of the past will be remedied, and our institutions reformed so that their working shall be made more just and effective. If this reconstruction of which we talk so much is to be really effective, our institutions must be thoroughly purged of the malefic influences of false group-persuasion : they must be so modelled that, instead of operating so as to preserve and increase the power merely of influential and privileged groups, they shall promote the welfare of the community. To secure that result, an even more fundamental reconstruction than that of our institutions is necessary : we must first reconstruct our methods of thinking, we must learn how to direct our persuasions rightly.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF PERSUASION





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ANY one who studies the process and elements of persuasion, and the manifold aberrations of which it is capable, cannot but be liable to a kind of cynicism ; and, indeed, for that matter, who that looks into his own heart could be other than cynical at times ? The process of persuasion, as we have analysed it, is seen to be fundamentally a non-rational process. Its very starting-point derives from the non-rational, the beliefs or wishes from which our persuasions start being accepted by us, not because they have been proved by rational demonstration to be true, but, ultimately, to satisfy some aspect of our instinctive nature. For most of us, the strongest motive to belief is furnished by the herd instinct in one form or another. We tend to accept as true the opinions and beliefs of the herd, or that portion of it with which we are in most intimate contact, and to reject antagonistic beliefs as untrue. The most potent factors in the determination of our beliefs are our primal instincts, race and rationality, education, books, newspapers, and the immediate circle of our neighbours and friends. Further, we are, as a rule, entirely un-

conscious of those, the real, sources of our beliefs, and flatter ourselves that we believe on exclusively rational grounds. The mental process, also, that follows the initial belief in persuasion may be described as being non-rational, since it is essentially an emotional process. Consisting in a series of judgments the value of which is proportionate to their capacity to reinforce and justify our belief, it follows throughout an emotional bias in the direction of the end proposed: underlying all the judgments that constitute it are instincts, tendencies, emotions, sentiments, or passions that we seek to satisfy. In the course of our persuasions we are apt to accept unquestioningly all ideas that harmonise with and reinforce those emotions, while such as appear to be inconsistent with them we reject.

Described in those terms, the process of persuasion, on first consideration, might easily be regarded with suspicion, as one not likely to lead us to true conclusions or just actions. In any case, the very birthright of an Englishman entitles him to feel afraid of a process that can be described as emotional. In this connection, however, it may be comforting, and it is important, to bear in mind that the non-rational is not necessarily irrational, and that, more often than not, fortunately for us, the non-rational processes of mind work on the side of, and not against, reason. The wisdom of past ages may be none the less wise because it has descended to us from the past; and the beliefs that we accept through suggestion, not from logical demonstration, may be just and true. Were this not so, humanity would be in a sad plight

indeed. Further, because a process is emotional, it is not therefore irrational: the instincts and tendencies that are most deeply rooted in our being may work on the side of reason, and preserve and develop the life both of individuals and communities. The really irrational method of dealing with a human problem is to neglect any of its essential conditions, among which, always, are emotions and sentiments. In the consideration of any question bearing on human life and action, it is the merely logical person, not he who includes within his view the emotions and sentiments inherently involved, whose persuasions are futile. More and more it is coming to be recognised that (in Mr. G. K. Chesterton's phrase) from reason in itself nothing rational has ever proceeded. Following out this line of thought, Mr. Benjamin Kidd asserts that the cause of all human progress is "psychic emotion". "The great secret of the coming age of the world," he says, "is that civilisation rests not on Reason but on Emotion. . . . It is clearly in evidence that the science of creating and transmitting public opinion under the influence of collective emotion is about to become the principal science of civilisation, to the mastery of which all governments and all powerful interests will in the future address themselves with every resource at their command. . . . The immature imaginings of the past about the place of reason in the world will all be put aside. . . . Civilisation has its origin, has its existence, and has the cause of its progress, in the emotion of the ideal." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Science of Power*. By Benjamin Kidd. Methuen & Co., Ltd.: London, 1918.

The first requisite, then, for the right direction of persuasion, considered as an emotional process, is that we should be able to discriminate between our emotions. If we fail in this discrimination, our instincts and emotions, dominating our persuasions, may easily lead us to false conclusions and badly judged or evil actions. All emotion is not worthy of reverence ; it is so only if it is of a certain quality and if it is controlled and rightly directed. In the above quotation from *The Science of Power*, for example, Mr. Kidd singles out for special mention, as the basis of civilisation, the emotion of the ideal, which in another place he defines as "the highest form of the sum of the Other-Regarding Emotions."

Outside of the other-regarding emotions, a large part of our emotional life lies, as it were, hidden away, deeply rooted in the unconscious basis of our mental and physical nature. At the heart of all of us lurk primitive love and hatred, combativeness, craving for power, fear, suspicion, anger, revenge, many dim elemental forces and suppressed wishes that link us to our primal ancestors and work within us unconsciously. It is of the first importance that we should recognise clearly the existence of this unconscious substratum in our nature, and the immense power that it exercises over us even in the most trivial persuasions and acts of our daily lives. From it, fundamentally, proceed most of the manifestations of false persuasion and the methods of secret impression and exploitation with which we have dealt in the two preceding chapters.

One of the main features of the Unconscious, as it

is also a predominant motive in much false persuasion, is the desire for power. Almost every day, in the lives of us all, some of our thoughts, words, and actions are prompted by a subconscious wish to feel or to demonstrate our superiority over others, expressing itself often in very petty forms, and concealing itself under the guise of a disinterested desire for the good of our fellows. Even in the question of the genial friend whose habit it is to hail you with an encouraging pat on the back as he enquires : ‘ Well, and how are *you* this morning ? ’ there may not infrequently be detected a latent tone of would-be superiority ; the Old Adam, the Unconscious, within our genial friend would often be much gratified to hear, in reply, news of some accident or misfortune by which his sense of superiority might be stimulated more keenly than by the mere asking of the question.

A second characteristic of the Unconscious is that it is often selfish and non-social, or anti-social, in tendency. This accounts for the circumstance, already noted, that our false persuasions, which generally proceed from the suppressed wishes of the Unconscious, tend to work in secret, and to realise themselves by hidden methods of impression and exploitation. When we give ourselves up to unconscious reverie and imagine ourselves in a position of great influence or power, we indulge an unsocial and uncontrolled tendency which we should not like to be revealed openly ; and when, obeying our sub-conscious wishes, we seek to gratify at the expense of others our selfish tendencies and emotions, as desire for comfort, privilege, wealth, or power, we naturally employ

such methods as will conceal from others (and as far as possible from ourselves) our real motives.

Much light has been thrown on the working of the Unconscious by recent medical and psychological investigations into the nature of certain pathological states. These investigations have proved that many cases of mental disorder are due to the unconscious repression of experiences with which intense and disagreeable emotions have been associated.<sup>1</sup> While the tendency to repress and try to forget any unpleasant complex of ideas is perfectly natural and normal, in certain pathological cases not only does the unpleasant complex become more or less completely split off, or dissociated, from the rest of consciousness, but a great part of the patient's previous experience may disappear, resulting in a dissociation of personality. During the War, for instance, this condition was frequently found in cases of "shell-shock." In another variety of neurasthenia, contrasting with the kind previously mentioned in that it is usually caused not by a sudden shock but by long-continued worry or anxiety, the unpleasant experiences and emotions are repressed more imperfectly, and assume various disguised or symbolic forms, such as hallucinations or persecution-mania. But, it should be observed, even when the break of personality is more or less complete, it is never absolutely so : a great deal of the past experience is subconsciously present and may by the employment of appropriate methods be raised to the level

<sup>1</sup> For the facts stated in this paragraph the writer is indebted to Dr. Charles S. Myers' *Present-Day Applications of Psychology* (Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1918).

of consciousness. In many such cases of disordered personality, whether the repression be incomplete, due to long-continued mental strain, or more or less complete, as the result of some sudden shock, a cure may be effected by making the patient explicitly conscious of the repressed experiences that have produced his disorder. The physician has to discover, in the first place, what the repressed experiences are ; and this he may do by leading the patient to talk of his troubles, noting words and associations that disturb him, and, if other methods fail, he may employ hypnotic suggestion. When the repressed experiences have been revealed, and when the patient has become fully conscious of them, and of their relation to his disorder, a rapid improvement in his condition generally follows.

Those facts have a direct bearing on the process of persuasion generally. The line of demarcation between the abnormal and the normal is, it is now recognised, a narrow one, and the study of pathological states has thrown much light on the normal processes of mind. Even in normal persons sub-conscious and repressed wishes and emotions operate powerfully, and, when they do operate, they are usually selfish or unsocial in their tendency, and, besides leading to self-deception, issue often in the employment of secret methods of impression and exploitation. Modern psychology has taught us that pathological states may be combated by bringing explicitly to consciousness the repressions that underlie them. In the same way we may often correct our false persuasions, our self-deceptions and our attempts to exploit others, by

analysing our motives more fully, becoming explicitly conscious of their real nature. They will then be seen, in many instances, to proceed from impulses and desires of which we have been unconscious and which we should be ashamed to reveal, in their reality, to others. We should be ashamed to reveal them, or even to acknowledge them to ourselves, because such impulses and desires, rooted in the Unconscious, are apt to be fantastic, remote from reality. In some modern novels—for instance, those of Dostœvsky,—the characters are dominated almost exclusively by the Unconscious, and are blown hither and thither by gusty impulses that vary from hour to hour and moment to moment: their actions, accordingly, are fantastic and inconsistent, and the world in which they move strikes the ordinary reader with a sense of strangeness, as something uncouth, bizarre, phantasmagoric. Significantly enough, most of the characters in novels of this kind are idlers, having no definite occupation in life. They suffer from having nothing particular to do, living in a strange inner world of their own, obsessed by the Unconscious. To bring explicitly into consciousness our hidden feelings and impulses is to bring them into relation with the actual world in which we live, and with the men and women among whom we live; and this is necessary alike for health of mind and right action. In real life, fortunately, most of us are under the necessity of earning a livelihood; and this circumstance in itself, bringing us into active relation with the outer world and other people, prevents us from acting always according to our merely subjective and



unconscious instincts. None the less, we act thus, all of us, much more frequently than we suppose. To satisfy our unconscious impulses, to promote the realisation of our interested and selfish desires, we plan a course of action, and carry it out; and, to justify ourselves, and persuade others that we are justified, we construct a baseless fabric of false reasoning, substituting for the selfish or mean motives that form the real ground of our action illusory motives that enable us to pose as persons unselfish and altruistic. That is a perfectly normal and customary habit of mind; and, as modern psychology has taught us that pathological obsessions may vanish when their hidden causes are brought to light, so, too, we may learn from it that, in the normal functioning of mind, we may often correct the falsity of our persuasions and the wrongness of our actions by making ourselves explicitly aware of the secret wishes and impulses underlying them. If, then, our persuasions are not to lead us astray, we must become aware of the constant solicitations of the Unconscious, which draw us on to the secret gratification of our primitive and selfish instincts. To be thus aware of the promptings and suggestions with which the Unconscious plies us is to be on our guard against them, and, as a result of that attitude, our conduct is more likely to rise to a higher plane. The capacity to discriminate between our emotions, between, for instance, the inchoate mass of primitive instincts that stir uneasily in our unconscious nature and the controlled and organised sentiments of our higher nature—that is of the first importance for right persuasion.

In other words, if our persuasions are to be directed rightly, we must be able to form right judgments of value, and, in particular, right moral judgments. While the lower forms of conduct issue directly from the promptings of instinct and the unconscious, the higher forms—those that we term moral—result from the voluntary control of the instincts, and this voluntary control proceeds from the idea of the self and from the sentiment centred about that idea. Moral conduct pre-supposes self-consciousness and the exercise of moral judgment.

Since our moral judgments are ultimately determined by our sentiments, the question naturally suggests itself, from what sentiments, more precisely, do moral judgments ensue? In connection with this question an important distinction to be drawn is that between our concrete and our abstract sentiments. By a concrete sentiment is meant one that is excited by a particular object or objects in our environment, such as the sentiment of love for children, or for a particular child; while by an abstract sentiment is meant one that is excited by some general quality or abstraction, such as love of truth, justice, goodness, or beauty. "The abstract sentiments alone," says Mr. McDougall in his *Social Psychology*,<sup>1</sup> "enable us to pass moral judgments of general validity. A man's concrete sentiments are apt to lead him to judgments that are valid only for himself, that have little objective or supra-individual validity: they pervert his judgment." The concrete sentiments, then, as being likely to lead to moral judgments having little or no objective validity, are antagonis-

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.*, chap. VIII.

tic to right persuasion, whether of ourselves or others; and the chief mark by which we may distinguish the concrete from the abstract sentiments is that they are pre-eminently interested, individualistic, self-centred. If the various instances of wandering persuasion cited above in Chapter II be examined, it will be readily perceived that the emotions and sentiments underlying them are invariably unsocial and individualistic in tendency.

The same statement may be applied to the emotions and sentiments underlying the methods of impression and exploitation frequently employed by groups, described in Chapter III, despite the fact that, on first consideration, the very idea of a group, or a body of men working for common interests, would appear to be inconsistent with mere individualism. Group effort, indeed, when rightly directed, possesses a moral and social value infinitely greater than could possibly attach to the efforts of individuals working by themselves, however unselfish their aims. The tendency of men to co-operate, which is becoming more and more marked, ought to assist us in realising more fully the higher values of life. The criticisms of group-effort put forward in the preceding chapter were directed, not against true co-operation, but against the imperfect and maimed forms of it. It would appear as if, the higher the potentialities for good contained in any individual or body, the lower are the depths of evil to which it may descend: so the persuasions of groups may lead to the most pernicious results, while, on the other hand, when rightly directed, their potency for good is

almost incalculable. It has been pointed out that groups, owing to their suggestibility, which is greater than that of individuals considered more or less as units, are apt to discourage independence of judgment, and that they tend to become militant when they regard the possession and increase of power as an end in and for itself, an attitude which frequently leads to a disregard of personality and to the employment of elaborately organised and secret methods of impression and exploitation. The conduct of groups in which those characteristics are prominent is not really animated by the spirit of co-operation. Each group then works exclusively for its own interests, disregarding the claims of individuals outside of it ; underlying such an association there is, not the spirit of co-operation, but merely desire for the exclusive comfort, privilege, or power that the association confers ; the interests of the group are indistinguishable from those of the members, each of whom is really labouring for his own advantage. In other words, such a group illustrates the working not of true co-operation, but of individualism or separatism on a large scale, individualism magnified, with its power for evil hugely increased. The conception of co-operation, of which we hear so much at the present time, may inspire in us at once hope and fear ; it is full of encouragement, and it is full of menace, according to the way in which we regard it. There is a strong tendency at present to speak of co-operation in indiscriminating terms of praise, as if it were a thing wholly good in itself. As a matter of fact, its chief result hitherto has been the formation of groups which work together, within

themselves, for their own interests, while at the same time they are animated by an exclusive principle which leads to disregard of the interests of, and often to the active exploitation or molestation of, other people.

If co-operation is not to produce evils even greater than those which result from the purest individualism possible in this world, it must be inspired by a wider principle than that which has hitherto inspired it. The whole trend of recent events leads to that conclusion, which forms the main theme of several of the latest books of Mr. H. G. Wells, than whom no writer has a readier gift for apprehending and interpreting the vital issues and needs of our time. In *War and the Future*, after remarking that "the spirit of collective service was never so strong and never so manifestly spreading and increasing as it is to-day," Mr. Wells proceeds to ask, "But service to what?" and replies to his own question as follows:—"I believe that this impulse to collective service can satisfy itself only under the formula that mankind is one State of which God is the undying king, and that the service of men's collective needs is the true worship of God. . . . We need a standard so universal that the plateplayer may say to the barrister or the duchess, or the Red Indian to the Limehouse sailor, or the Anzac soldier to the Sinn Feiner or the Chinaman, 'What are we two doing for it?' And to fill the place of that 'it,' no other idea is great enough or commanding enough, but only the world kingdom of God." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *War and the Future: Italy, France, and Britain at War.* By H. G. Wells. Cassell & Co., Ltd. 1917.

The futility and wrongness of our persuasions are due, fundamentally, to the narrowness of our minds. The late Earl Grey's 'Rule of Life' (borrowed from Mazzini) suggests a criterion that we may usefully apply to our persuasions and actions in so far as they concern our relations with others:—"Ask yourself as to every act you commit, within the circle of family or country: If what I now do were done by and for all men, would it be beneficial or injurious to Humanity? And if your conscience tell you it would be injurious, desist; desist, even though it seem that an immediate advantage to your country or family would be the result." <sup>1</sup>

Right persuasion is based upon respect for human nature, upon the recognition of the value of humanity as such. When it is so based, the exploitation of the many in the interests of a few becomes impossible. It is worth our while, therefore, deliberately to consider any factors that may tend to foster that spirit. One of them is the circumstance that such pernicious, and sometimes terrible, consequences ensue from any failure to recognise the fundamental unity of each with all. The evil of war, for instance, whether manifesting itself in social and economic conflict between classes or in the military conflict of nations—would that have been so conspicuous and persistent a feature in the world's history if the principle of the value of humanity had been rightly appreciated? It is the contrary spirit of exclusiveness, of separating ourselves from others, our class

<sup>1</sup> *Albert, Fourth Earl Grey. A Last Word.* By Harold Begbie. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

from other classes, our nation from other nations, that has so persistently directed, and still directs, the persuasions of men to evil ends. If we are to persuade ourselves rightly, we must learn to enter more intimately into the lives of others, to understand their situations, their needs and feelings, better.

There are those who predict that, the War having ended, there will now follow a period of conflict between the classes in every European country; and this prognostication may easily fulfil itself if in the future the various classes of society are not animated more deeply than they have been in the past by a spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation. If discord between class and class should continue, each striving merely for its own so-called interests, nothing, it would seem, will be able to prevent a world-wide social war that will be even more destructive or annihilating in its consequences than the wars of the nations have been.

It cannot be doubted, however, that the conditions and results of the late War have been such as to create and emphasise a sense of, and the need for, unity among men. In this country, for instance, during the War, the different social classes and political groups, to a certain extent, and for the time being, reconciled their differences, realising that if the War was to be won a united effort must be made. Again, the mere fact that, in the actual fields of war, men from all parts of the world—British, French, Belgians, Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, Serbs, Roumanians, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, South Africans,

Americans, Japanese, Indians, and even Chinese—worked side by side on behalf of a common cause, could not but lead to a better natural understanding and promote a sense of community. It is a significant fact that when men touch the elemental facts of life, stripped of its artificialities, and live in daily contact with death, the differences between them sink out of sight: men then realise intimately that each is necessary to every other. The most striking feature of life among the Allied Armies was the cheerful spirit of comradeship by which the men were animated—it was that spirit alone that sustained them amid the dangers and unspeakable hardships, the scenes of utter desolation and ruin, by which they were surrounded.

It may be hoped, therefore, that the same unity of endeavour that inspired the Allied Forces in the War may now, before it should be too late, act as a solvent in the settlement of the difficult problems of reconstruction. But that this will prove to be the case is by no means certain. There is, indeed, nothing in the world more difficult of attainment than unity of endeavour and purpose among diverse human beings. The difficulty experienced by distinct groups or nations in realising a high degree of unity was illustrated, for instance, during the War, in the length of time that was taken to achieve a unified command of the Allied Armies. History had shown conclusively that only through unity of command could a number of allied nations achieve the most successful results in war; but the jealousies and fears and supposed interests of the several nations forming the Alliance interfered for a long time



to prevent the appointment of a supreme commander. It was only the stern logic of events that ultimately led to the realisation of this end—the serious crises of life, as has been remarked above, demonstrate with irresistible force the need for unity among men, thus proving that it is a fundamental law of our being and that it cannot be transgressed with impunity.

The ultimate criterion of persuasion, as a process involving moral judgment, must be a moral criterion; but false persuasion, we have seen in Chapter II, involves not only defective and wrong standards of moral judgment, but intellectual and logical fallacies. From a moral point of view, false persuasion is always interested, exclusive in tendency, unsocial, selfish. From an intellectual point of view, it may be described as being partial and abstract in tendency. It involves a partial and wrong view of human nature. When, for instance, our persuasions have for their end the exploitation of others, the manipulation of man so as to further our own interests, there is, underlying them, always, a failure to distinguish between human nature and inanimate nature. It is possible to manipulate inanimate things, to experiment with them and mould them to our purposes; and modern science has done this with wonderful results. But the very greatness of the results achieved by science has led to a widespread assumption, held for the most part implicitly, that man may be controlled in the same way, by the employment of the same scientific methods of manipulation and experiment. This may be considered as a form of what is sometimes termed

“the intellectualist fallacy.” There is in man’s nature an incalculable element which makes any precise or certain prediction of the effects of our actions impossible: in human affairs we cannot, manipulate and experiment as we will, predict with certainty that such-and-such an effect will follow such-and-such causes. While the forces of inanimate Nature are determined, and the results of their operation may be foreseen, the forces of man’s will are self-determined, and the results to which they may lead cannot be accurately predicted. The attempt, therefore, arbitrarily and forcibly to impose our will on other people, to modify, exploit, and turn them to account to serve our supposed interests or “benevolent” designs, is not only morally base; it is inherently vain and foolish.

Considered either from the moral or the intellectual point of view, right persuasion is seen to be founded on respect for personality, on a recognition of the fact that we are all different, and react differently to the same forces. This consideration has an important bearing on the principle previously enunciated, that persuasion should be based on the other-regarding rather than on the self-regarding sentiments, and that the motive-force of our social activities should be the co-operation of each in the service of all. So much has been written of late regarding the need for social service that we may be in danger of imagining it to be our duty constantly to intervene in the lives of others, with a view to correcting or helping them, whether they wish it or not, to run a tilt, as it were, Don Quixote-like, against any and every

instance of misfortune or wrong-doing or oppression that we see, or think we see. But there are practical limits set to the principle of altruism, of working for the good of others. If we reflect that each of us, after all, lives in a world of his own, and that we simply cannot completely understand the situation or case of a single mortal other than ourselves (and how few of us understand even our own situations !), we shall be led to exercise more care and caution in attempting to direct or correct the lives of others, or even to relieve their distresses and right their wrongs. For most of us, the social service that we may be expected to do, and that we may do most effectively, is bounded by the opportunities that come to us, that we do not go out of our way to seek, in the course of our daily lives, as members of a family or as workers in a trade or business or profession.

We have now to consider persuasion more specifically from a logical standpoint. It was pointed out in Chapter II that false persuasion does not exclude reasoning, or, more correctly, the simulacrum of reasoning. When we view any situation partially, or exclusively in relation to ourselves, our own feelings and interests, we almost invariably seek to justify ourselves by a more or less elaborate process of "reasoning." For instance, if we have acted, or are about to act, wrongly, and feel uneasy about it, we may find comfort or justification by comparing ourselves with others who have acted similarly and yet have been esteemed righteous; or we may excuse ourselves on the ground that, at any rate, we are not so bad as some one else known to us; or we

may blame our circumstances; or argue that, since the end justifies the means, we should not permit ourselves to scrutinise the means too closely.

We have already seen that the emotional basis of many of our false persuasions and foolish or wrong actions lies hidden away in our unconscious nature. Similarly, much of the reasoning in which we indulge to support and justify our beliefs and actions is, relatively, uncontrolled and involuntary, and proceeds from the unconscious elements in our being. The reasoning involved in this uncontrolled thinking resembles deliberate and conscious reasoning in that it proceeds by analogy; but differs from it in being of a crude and primitive kind. The function of reason in human life is to record and systematise the experience of the past, to provide a point of departure from which we may be led to correct past errors and create a better future. When we realise that we have made mistakes in the past, that we have classified wrongly the situations in which we have found ourselves, by reasoning we may correct those mistakes when a similar situation or set of circumstances presents itself. But the reasoning of the Unconscious can afford us no such guidance or help. The analogies that it draws are crude and indiscriminating, inherent not in the circumstances of the case but in the mass of primitive instincts, desires, needs, and suppressed wishes that constitute it. They are always fantastic, remote from reality, and are sometimes of the weirdest possible description.

The nature of those false analogies of the Unconscious is well demonstrated in dreams, which

afford a ready means of investigating the Unconscious and for that reason have been minutely studied by writers of the psycho-analytic school. According to those writers, dreams are the expression of experiences or wishes that have been repressed in our conscious lives on account of their disagreeable or painful qualities. In our dreams, the Unconscious, working by analogy, transmutes those experiences and wishes in such a manner as to disguise their specific unpleasant quality; and the disguises under which they are presented are termed "symbols." The following case is frequently cited as typical—a young woman dreams that a burglar is in her bedroom—this is simply the disguised or symbolic expression of a repressed sexual wish. While the interpretation of dreams on the principle of symbolism has been marked by much hasty generalisation, and by considerable exaggeration and distortion in detail, there can be no doubt of the fundamental correctness of the theory. It is borne out by even a superficial acquaintance with the phenomena of dreams; and no one who has studied carefully his own dreams can entertain any doubt as to the grotesque and often astounding symbolism of dream-procedure.

The point with which we are here concerned is that the Unconscious works thus not only in dreams, but in the persuasions of our everyday life. Reverie, for instance, which is a kind of random persuasion, exemplifies all the characteristics of the Unconscious. It is primarily selfish and unsocial: the central figure in our reveries is always ourselves, conceived, relatively, as apart from the

rest of the world. For this reason reverie is always fantastic, since to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world, even in thought, is to cut ourselves off from reality. It shares also the tendency of the Unconscious to bilk the unpleasant, and to create symbolic situations (often grotesque) in which the sharper edges of reality are blunted; and it exhibits, too, that instinctive craving for superiority over others which is so marked a feature of the Unconscious. And in false persuasion of a more highly organised type the fantastic classification and analogies of the Unconscious exercise an equally potent influence. To deaden the prick of conscience, a Joseph Ravendale imagines himself as a Scriptural David. To justify his prosecution of a man he knows to be innocent, the dishonest advocate pictures himself in the rôle of a saviour of society. To stimulate the patriotism of his countrymen and resentment against other nations, the defender of Germany draws a fantastic analogy between the sufferings of his country and the sufferings of Christ. In each of these cases the error arises simply from want of discrimination, from a failure to classify correctly or see things as they really are, and from the positive craving of the Unconscious to eliminate the unpleasantness of reality by substituting for it a pleasing illusion. If, then, we are to persuade ourselves rightly, we must not only discriminate between our emotions, distinguishing the primitive and anti-social cravings of the Unconscious from our higher sentiments; we must also discriminate truly between our images and ideas.

The fundamental principle underlying every

species of reasoning is the principle of resemblance or analogy.<sup>1</sup> Our reasoning is sound when the resemblance postulated between the terms and propositions we employ is significant and essential; it is fallacious when the resemblance postulated is irrelevant or specious or accidental. Error may be regarded as being simply wrong discrimination, or wrong classification, and all classification is based on the degree of resemblance supposed to exist between the things classified. When we act erroneously, we imagine ourselves to be in a certain situation, while the situation is not what we suppose it to be. An essential condition of right persuasion, considered from a logical standpoint, is that we should see the situation as it really is, or classify it correctly. If our persuasions are based on false or imperfect analogies, not essentially inherent in the circumstances involved, our resulting actions will not be such as to meet the situation adequately.

And the correct classification of our ideas and images, essential to sound reasoning, is intimately bound up with the right discrimination of our emotions and sentiments. The selfish and wayward impulses of the Unconscious are invariably accompanied by fantastic analogies and specious reasoning that proceed from the same source. True persuasion is a self-conscious process marked by the interaction and organic fusion of intellect, imagination, and emotion, the particular mode of their fusion being determined not by the primitive cravings of the Unconscious but by the essential nature of the situation involved. When we per-

<sup>1</sup> *Cp. sup., p. 17.*

suade ourselves or others rightly, the inferences drawn, the images and analogies employed, the emotions excited, are all naturally inherent in the situation. In false persuasion, on the other hand, the intellect, the imagination, and the emotions work uncontrolled, bound by no real relationship to the circumstances of the case: simply because it suits us, because we are determined to justify our beliefs by any means, we reason fallaciously and stimulate the imagination wantonly and unwarrantably, and, to impel to the action desired, we arouse emotions that, though they may achieve their purpose, are yet essentially irrelevant, not arising naturally from, and having no inherent connection with, the subject-matter of our persuasions. The fallacies of a particular process of persuasion may be more or less purely intellectual, or imaginative, or emotional, that is, they may be due more exclusively to aberrations of the intellect, or of the imagination, or of the emotions; but each of those kinds of fallacy implies the other. It is true that persuasion, as a series of judgments of value, is fundamentally based on the emotions and sentiments that constitute the standard of value of those judgments; and all the fallacies of persuasion may be said to have an effective basis in so far as they are due ultimately to an emotional bias in favour of the end proposed; but our emotions stimulate and direct and work along with the intellect and imagination. In true persuasion the three work in harmony, and are governed by their essential relation to the subject-matter; in false persuasion they work at random, without restraint, only to realise



the desired end. The absolute distinction that is often drawn between reason and passion is illusory : there is, in reality, no essential antagonism between them. As a poet has observed, "reason is highest passion in a soul sublime." Only through persuasion that shall be thus animated by the perfect fusion of high passion and right reason can the hopes now so generally entertained of a better life for individuals and communities ever be realized.



CHAPTER V

PERSUASION AS A FORM OF  
EXPRESSION



## CHAPTER V

### PERSUASION AS A FORM OF EXPRESSION

#### WORDLESS PERSUASION: GESTURE AND ACTION, PRESTIGE, PERSONALITY; MUSIC AND PAINTING, THE CINEMATOGRAFH

WE have now to consider persuasion not so exclusively as a subjective mental process, but rather as a form of expression calculated to modify the conduct and actions of others. The principal medium or instrument that we employ ordinarily to attain this end is verbal: we seek to persuade others mainly by our words, which may be either spoken or written. But, besides words, there are other instruments of persuasion, which generally operate in conjunction with, and as more or less subsidiary to, speech: thus a speaker's gesture and action, his voice, even his appearance, his prestige, and his personality, are potent means of persuasion. Again, we may seek to persuade others without using words at all, as by a pictorial representation of situations and events: the cinematograph, for example, is now frequently used as a means of propaganda.

The extent to which gesture and action are employed in persuasion varies among different peoples. The Latin peoples, for instance, employ

them more freely and more naturally and effectively than the Anglo-Saxon. "When the Cardinal in the Vatican," as Mrs. Meynell says, "with his dramatic Italian hands, bids the kneeling groups to arise, he does more than bid them. He lifts them, he gathers them up, far and near, with the gesture of both arms; he takes them to their feet with the compulsion of his expressive force."<sup>1</sup>

The following passage, translated from Cardinal Maury's treatise "On the Eloquence of the Pulpit," illustrates, somewhat elaborately, how the mere modulation of facial expression, the movements of the eyes, even silence itself instead of words, may persuade an assembly. The instance cited is the opening of Massillon's funeral oration on Louis XIV:—"Massillon took for his text these words of Solomon: 'I am become great; I have surpassed in glory and in wisdom all those who have gone before me in Jerusalem: and I have recognised that therein is nought but vanity and vexation of spirit.' After having delivered slowly a passage so remarkable for the contrast of the beginning with the end, and so well adapted to the effect he wished to produce from the very outset of his discourse, he appeared to be absorbed in the reflections that those divergent ideas of greatness and of misery suggested to his mind. He desired to meditate and commune with his sad thoughts. The emotion that he visibly showed became a happy oratorical preparation for making his hearers share with him the sentiment of silent grief in which he was absorbed. His silence surprised the people, and

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Essays*. By Alice Meynell. Burns & Oates: 1911.

excited the liveliest interest. Before uttering a single word, Massillon, as if sunk in a stupor of dejection, his head bent, his hands resting on the pulpit, stood for some moments motionless. His eyes, half-closed, were turned at first on the funereal attire of the congregation around him ; presently he averted his gaze, to find, if he might, in these mournful precincts, other objects less sad and lugubrious ; he perceived on all sides, on the walls of the church, only the trophies and emblems of death. His looks, thus saddened, sought refuge on the altar, which was even more charged with funeral symbols and trappings. He seemed overwhelmed by the spectacle, when, turning with affright to escape from the double pain of those appearances and his own sombre thoughts, his eyes fell upon the catafalque, raised in the middle of the church as the sanctuary of the dead. In consternation at seeing around him nothing but sceptres or diadems covered with crape, symbols everywhere of the overthrow of all human greatness, Massillon desired to give an account to the assembly of the result of his silence, to make it share in the same impression that he had experienced, to place, by the irresistible power of his first words, his whole audience in harmony with the solitary thoughts that the secret monologue of his grief had inspired in him, and he opened his address by exclaiming, in the midst of all these ruins that had succeeded so much glory : ‘ God alone is great, my brothers ! ’ ”<sup>1</sup>

Such elaborately studied rhetorical effects are, in general, distasteful to English audiences : they

<sup>1</sup> *Essai sur l'Eloquence de la Chaire.* Par S. M. le Cardinal Maury.

suggest artifice, and may even appear ridiculous. And often, when gesture and action are extensively employed, there are good reasons for our distrust of them. Even in the instance just cited, the reader of Maury's description may feel that the emotion displayed by the preacher must in some respects have been artificial, and was not essentially inherent in the situation from which it arose. It might be considered, for instance, that the "sentiment of silent grief" felt by a religious man, on the death of such a monarch as Louis XIV, could not have been very deep or very personal; and it may be remarked, too, by the way, that the very language in which Maury describes the situation is full of artificial and hackneyed phrases, corresponding, perhaps, to a certain artificiality in the situation itself. But in judging on this point we must, of course, bear in mind that the fashions of oratory vary in different countries and at different times, and that an emotional display which may now to us appear artificial and overwrought may have been, in France at the time of Louis XIV, when the idol of kingship commanded a high regard, not only effective but natural.

As an instance of the striking effect which a dramatic action, as distinct from gesture, may exercise upon an audience, an incident may be mentioned which occurred in the House of Commons on March 5, 1917, in a debate on Home Rule for Ireland. The late Mr. John Redmond had been speaking, and concluded as follows:—"For us to go on and continue the debate after what has been said would be absolutely futile. I therefore appeal to my colleagues not to take further part in the



debate, but let the House do what it likes with the resolution and amendment. I ask them not to remain here to continue a futile and humiliating debate, but to withdraw with me and take counsel with me as to the next step we shall take." The newspaper report of the proceedings adds :—" This dramatic statement was delivered in a passionate voice. The Nationalists were greatly excited and cheered Mr. Redmond to the echo. When the Irish leader left his seat he was followed by the whole of the Nationalists, who shouted opprobrious epithets at the Treasury Bench as they left the Chamber. . . . The scene was the most exciting which has occurred since the War broke out, and caused an immense sensation."

No one would suggest that Mr. Redmond, in the action with which he concluded his speech, was insincere: his action was, beyond a doubt, the spontaneous and perfectly natural expression of his feelings. But there are many cases in which dramatic gesture and action are employed by speakers insincerely, as a calculated means for the illicit impression and exploitation of their audiences. As the external forms in which emotion expresses itself, they are a natural accompaniment of spoken persuasion, but, like emotion itself, they may be perverted to base purposes. The successful simulation of the external forms of emotion by an insincere speaker is, under certain circumstances, not difficult. A crowd or an audience, prepossessed or prejudiced in favour of a particular point of view, and apt to be swayed by any suggestion in harmony with its ideas, may be strongly influenced by dramatic gestures or actions, even though these may

be quite insincere. The mob orator, tearing a passion to tatters, o'erdoing Termagant, may produce a violent and contagious excitement in his audience, solely with the object of realising his end, without regard to its essential nature. The only criteria that we can rightly apply to the use of gesture and action in persuasion are appropriateness and sincerity. The action should be suited to the word and to the speaker's personality, and these should be suited to the action. When the emotions of which gesture and action are the expression are not naturally inherent in the circumstances of the case and in the speaker's personality, the resulting gesture and action cannot but be, in some way or other, artificial or false; but frequently the suggestibility and indiscrimination of crowds prevent that artificiality or falsity from being perceived.

To some extent the effect of gesture and action, as of all the other elements of persuasion considered as a form of expression, may depend upon a speaker's prestige, which is one of the most important factors of success in spoken persuasion. Prestige is itself a form of emotional suggestibility, and, as such, is one of the non-rational elements in persuasion. Its influence may be well founded, but more often is not so, inasmuch as it depends usually upon external and superficial, not inner or essentially moral, qualities. For instance, the man of moral prestige, as distinct from the man of moral character, is one who conforms carefully to the external forms of current morality, who walks discreetly when he is in the public eye, and refrains from associating himself in any way with doubtful characters or places. Thus the moral prestige of Jesus, who

consorted with publicans and sinners, among those of his contemporaries who adhered strictly to the traditional morality of the Law, must have been small. Again, it is easy for a debater, say a Member of Parliament, to gain logical prestige by always presenting his arguments in an apparently strictly logical form, or by simulating a great regard for verbal accuracy and consistency and the externals of logic; and, similarly, the prestige of physical strength easily attaches to the man who possesses the external features of strength. We are all of us too apt to estimate prestige in terms that have no great value, and to be influenced in our persuasions by external qualities such as hereditary position and the possession of wealth. The prestige of kings and princes accrues largely from the brilliance of great traditions and the splendour of courts, that of the Church and the Law from the outward dignities and solemn associations of long-established ceremonies, that of statesmen from the position of power that they occupy, and that of nations from their wealth and military strength. True prestige, however, should attach only to moral and personal values.

Prestige is often confused with personality, from which it differs radically. Its essential quality, indeed, is impersonality. When we are carried away by a speaker's moral or logical prestige, resulting from his discreet adherence to the forms of morality or logic, or by his position or wealth or power, or his association with ancient and established institutions, we yield to a non-rational and sentimental enthusiasm that is not based on a consideration of the speaker's real personality.

The persuasion of newspapers is impressive because it presents ideas with a kind of impersonal authority, calculated to affect readers with the idea that it is too high to be questioned. Similarly, much prestige and authority attach to Acts of Parliament, the edicts of the Law, and the doctrines and practices of the Church, because of their impersonal quality.

The more superficial aspects of personality are akin to prestige, and also are apt to affect us in persuasion non-rationally and sentimentally. Unconsciously to ourselves, we are influenced in our judgment of a speech by the speaker's voice, his gestures and action, his general appearance, and, above all, by the expressiveness of his features. Many people, when they go to a theatre, make a point of sitting near the stage, knowing that the personality of the actors then works upon them more strongly. A kind of personal magnetism is held to be one of the most effective qualifications of a public speaker. And that we should be influenced by the outward expression of personality is not only inevitable, but right, so long as it is really the expression of personality. When the breezy Captain Scupper, of the Mariners' Union, speaking on an open-air platform, at a suitable moment in his discourse smilingly divests himself of his coat, and proceeds to "rub it in" to his opponents bare-armed, we feel that the action is personal and characteristic, a human gesture, and it attracts us to the speaker, and is in a manner persuasive. But all such manifestations of personality are justifiable only when they correspond to a characteristic inner quality—be it geniality,

friendliness, respect for humanity, tolerance, humour, or what not ? If we feel that a speaker is sincere, and a good man, we may listen to him sympathetically, even if we disagree with the opinions he expresses. In our everyday intercourse, we attach value to what a man says not so much according to his actual words as according to what we know of his character ; and it is wise and right to do so. The elder Cato defined an orator as *vir bonus peritus dicendi*—"the good man skilled in speaking" ; and it would be hard to improve on this definition. Not to be swayed by the externalities of prestige, or by temperamental qualities that may be superficially or even humanly attractive, to discriminate closely between the true and the false, to regard sincerity and personal moral values as the ultimate criteria of all the forms and elements of persuasion—so long as our judgments of men and things are not governed by those principles, we are likely to be persuaded wrongly, and to be at the mercy of those who attempt to manipulate their fellow-men to their own purposes by a cunning exploitation of their mental weaknesses and defects.

The elements of persuasion that we have been considering so far in this chapter—gesture and action, prestige and personality—usually accompany words and add to their effect. But persuasive influence may be exercised without the employment of words at all—for instance, by music and the plastic arts. These are inspired by emotion, and seek to excite it in others. Their emotional appeal, however, differs from the emotion of persuasion proper in that it involves no direct reference to

action. The fine arts imply, both in the artist and in those whom he addresses, a certain detachment from the practical and active interests of life ; where the tendency to a definite practical action or line of action is strong, it is likely to seek satisfaction in other forms of expression than the purely artistic. In listening to great music, the ordinary person who enjoys music but is not musically educated may be lapped sensuously in warm waves of vague or subtle emotion—his mental state is essentially passive, opposed to activity—he is wrapt, as we say, in his feelings. Yet even in this case there is a reference to practical life and activity. The music mysteriously awakens the hearer to potentialities in his nature, and in human nature, of which he is not aware at ordinary times, and by this spiritual awakening, soft and meditative though it may be at the moment, his outlook and conduct in life may be affected—to that extent the music may be said to influence him persuasively. And, under certain circumstances, music may lead directly to action ; but, when it is consciously employed for this purpose, it ceases to be, strictly, a fine art, and becomes utilitarian, or an artifice, a mechanical device used to elicit a mechanical response. Dance-music is intended to modify and regulate the movements of the dancers ; and sensual music heard amid sensual surroundings may lead to sensuality. The playing of a national anthem in a public place may, under certain conditions, lead to riotous action by a crowd. The exile from home, having listened to the strains of “ Home, Sweet Home ” raucously rendered by the gramophone, may leave the saloon bar and go out to write to his wife. Any

of the senses, indeed, may act as an instrument of persuasion, and induce action, in so far as it stimulates instincts and emotions; as when the sense of smell induces the lazy man to get out of bed and walk downstairs for breakfast. The appeal to sight, especially, in pictorial art, is frequently employed with persuasive intent. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Greek Churches, for example, pictures are used not merely for the adornment of the walls but for the more effective persuasion of the congregation. A Russian writer, V. V. Rozanoff, remarks thus on the value of frescoes in religious persuasion:—"In orthodoxy, the wall must not be dumb, it must speak. But the wall cannot speak by texts—for which there are books. The people in the church ought to see themselves surrounded by holy scenes, pictures—of immense content and of immense dimensions. Such are frescoes. . . . Frescoes make the walls live. The soul poured forth on the walls calls to prayer, and says as much to the worshippers as does the reading and singing in church, not less. . . . The worshippers feel around them the great background of historical Christianity. They not only hear but see—Christian history, they not only hear but see—the story of salvation, they not only hear but see—the exploits of the martyrs, the suffering. . . . They see the pageant of orthodoxy, its splendid victories."<sup>1</sup>

A form of pictorial persuasion which is of special interest at the present time is the persuasion of the cinematograph. During the War several Govern-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary*. By Stephen Graham. Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1916.

ment Departments employed the moving picture extensively as a means of conveying information and making propaganda: thus both in our own and in allied countries steps were taken to impress on people, by means of the cinema, the true causes of the War, and the nature of German atrocities in the conduct of the War. Again, such films as "Where are my Children?" illustrate the value of the cinematograph as a means for presenting social questions in a striking and dramatic form.

The principal element of persuasion in the representations of the cinema is narration. The film is well adapted to unfold to us vividly a series of actions, events, or incidents: it excites our emotions through the senses and the imagination, depicting imaginary situations or situations that have actually occurred.

The plastic arts generally, it has been already remarked, contain some of the elements, and may be employed as instruments, of persuasion; but the cinema has enlarged the boundaries of pictorial art, and created a fresh form of expression, more fully adapted to realise the purposes of persuasion. Painting and sculpture, employing as signs colours and figures in space, can only express properly objects which are coexistent, or the parts of which coexist—that is to say, bodies. They may represent actions, since all bodies exist not only in space, but also in time, and at each moment of their existence may assume a different appearance; but they can do this only suggestively, through the medium of bodies, and can represent only one particular moment of an action. They cannot represent



movement absolutely ; they fix a momentary aspect or arrangement of bodies, and give to it a character of permanence—so that Keats can say appropriately of the lover and the maid carved on the Grecian urn—"for ever wilt thou love and she be fair." The proper domain of the plastic arts, then, is space ; they are strictly limited in regard to the category of time.

The cinematograph, on the other hand, is not so limited : it may depict a series of events the duration of which is supposed to extend through months or years, and, in a single picture, it may represent the successive appearance of a situation, as seen in the varying groupings and attitudes of the actors. It resembles painting in so far as, the signs it employs being figures in space, it is well adapted to represent bodies, and, through them, simultaneous actions ; but it transcends painting, and approximates to the art of verbal narration, in that it can represent effectively successive action in time.

In some respects, indeed, the moving picture is even better fitted than narration to exhibit the time-relations of events. For instance, two events significantly related to one another and happening simultaneously may be brought before us with telling effect in almost an instant of time, while in narration lengthy successive explanations would be required to make clear their proper relation. In a propagandist film that has been widely exhibited, "My Four Years in Germany", one of the pictures having represented a banquet given in honour of the United States ambassador by high political personages in Berlin, who profess the utmost good-

will towards America, the next picture shows, in effective contrast, a simultaneous meeting of the German military authorities, at which the real hostility and the secret plans of Germany are made clear. This is a typical instance of the methods of persuasion to which cinematographic representation is well adapted : the sequence of the pictures is intended to produce in the spectator a particular emotion favourable to a particular belief.

The comparative freedom that the cinema possesses in the representation of time-relations is illustrated in another characteristic device, which expresses also the freedom from time-limitations that is characteristic of thought. We all know how, in a given situation at a particular moment, our thoughts may revert to the past or project themselves into the future, and how this retrospection and prevision may affect our persuasions : this faculty of mind the film is naturally fitted to illustrate. When the United States ambassador is informed that he will not be handed his passports until he has given an undertaking that all German ships interned in American ports shall be restored, there passes before his mind's eye a vision of the dinner-table, adorned with American flags, at which he had recently sat, and he recalls the cordial professions of friendship made by his hosts and fellow-guests—his memories are represented concretely on the film, on which the picture of the banquet again takes visible form, and vanishes, as quickly and silently as it had passed before the ambassador's mental vision. Or, again, in a similar propagandist film, when the hero, a young American, is invited to undertake a dangerous

mission in Germany in the character of a German officer returned for service, considering the proposal, he sees himself, in imagination, attired in a German uniform, and, in correspondence with this image, the spectator sees his figure gradually merge into that of the officer whose part he is to play; and when, later on in the same story, the American heroine, at a dinner-party in Berlin, drinks the German toast, "To Victory", the difference of meaning that may attach to the phrase is pointed by a picture of the American flag appearing above her glass as she raises it. Those devices may be considered to be somewhat crude and theatrical, but as being characteristic of a new and interesting form of expression they give the spectator a certain legitimate pleasure that may even be called artistic. And they are well fitted to produce the effect of persuasion in that they exhibit concretely and vividly, in a manner that may be apprehended at once by the spectator, the inner workings of the actors' minds, and induce in him readily the ideas, feelings, and wishes appropriate to the purpose of the representation.

One of the most effective instruments employed by the cinema to excite emotion is the varied play of expression on the actors' faces. In the changing expressions of the human face there is much that is charming and attractive, and much that is more deeply appealing. The poet says of his mistress that he "loves the sorrows of her changing face," and the outward expression, in feature or gesture, of any fine emotion stirs in us naturally a sympathetic reaction, just as, on the other hand, the expression of a sinister or coarse feeling

should arouse in us a feeling of repulsion or disgust. In a cinematographic representation of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, while women and children are being murdered in the streets, the spectator is shown a picture of Catherine de Medici, the instigator of the massacre, in her salon: pleased and passive she sits, meditating on the fulfilment of her plans; the expression on her face excites the spectator's indignation more effectively than any detailed description in words could do. Painting also is capable of stimulating emotion by this means, but it cannot represent changes of expression—these are more effectively rendered by the cinema than by any other form of verbal or pictorial presentation. So too with gesture and bodily action: when, for instance, a man is depicted by the cinema in the act of treating a woman with brutal violence, not only his facial expression, but his movements and gestures also, combine to arouse disgust.

As a form of expression through which events and situations may be vividly presented, and through which, by gesture and movement and facial expression as well as by pictorial narrative, the spectator's emotions may be stimulated, the cinematograph may be regarded as an effective instrument of persuasion. It is probably no exaggeration to say of the film above mentioned, "My Four Years in Germany", that from it two-fifths of the population of this country obtained for the first time some elementary notion of the real causes of the war; and it is certain that in future the cinema will be employed even more extensively than it has been in the past for propagandist purposes.

But, while we cannot question the effectiveness, in some respects, of the cinema as a means of persuasion, its limitations and defects are no less marked ; and, indeed, it is largely owing to those very limitations and defects that it is so effective as a means of popular persuasion. In the first place, it can express a thesis or a proposition only in concrete form, exhibiting it in a particular application or applications : the deeper and more abstract aspects of a question it cannot represent : the spectator's intellect is apt to lie dormant while the film revolves. The persuasion of the cinema is such as to appeal to the most unintellectual of spectators ; and while this is, from one point of view, a source of strength, it is also a weakness, for true persuasion is no facile or passive process, but should involve the activity of the whole mind, as compact of reason, imagination, feeling, and will.

Further, the persuasion of the cinema is marked, as a rule, though it need not be, by irrelevance, exaggeration, and sensational treatment of its subject-matter. In the propagandist films, which aim not simply at the narration of a story or the representation of events, but at enforcing a belief or a point of view, the underlying principle of connection between the pictures is usually by no means a logical one—the principle would seem to be, rather, that any particular picture is relevant at any particular moment if only it will stimulate the desired emotion and urge to the desired belief. It should be possible, one thinks, to combine with attention to propagandist aims a stricter sense of coherence than is sometimes shown : inconsequence and incoherence of presentation generally imply

some want of truth, or actual falsity, in the subject-matter of our persuasions.

Again, the actions depicted by the cinema are too frequently sensational or violent in kind, and the gestures and expressions of the actors too often ugly and of exaggerated intensity—the capacity of the cinema to depict gesture, movement, and actions involving large numbers of people, is abused—it is sought to impress and persuade by an accumulation of lurid effects, more fitted to bewilder and tire an intelligent person than really to persuade. The method of true persuasion is different: it proceeds by gradation, by the economical and artistic use of relevant material, rather than by accumulation.

It must be further noted that the method of the cinema is not exclusively pictorial: it involves also the use of words. This circumstance detracts from the value of the cinema considered from an artistic point of view: it means that cinematographic representation does not, so to speak, stand on its own legs as a form of expression; besides its own characteristic methods, it has to employ also the resources and methods of verbal explanation and narration. But this circumstance adds to the value of the cinema regarded as a means of persuasion. Through words it is enabled at least to suggest the more abstract aspects of a question; for instance, in the film, "Where are my Children?", when a surgeon is being tried on the charge of having performed an illegal operation, extracts from the reports of a Commission are shown, setting forth the eugenic point of view in relation to the problem under consideration.

On the other hand, the circumstance that the cinema produces its effects directly by mechanical contrivances not only detracts from any claim it may have to be considered as an art, but also lessens its value as an instrument of persuasion. Being reproduced by mechanical means, the movements and gestures represented on the screen cannot affect the spectator so personally and intimately as if they were performed directly by living people. Even in the theatre, the emotions produced in the audience are 'second-hand'; and therefore likely to be transient and, in their more permanent results, ineffective. But the emotions excited by the representations of the cinema are not only 'second-hand', but, further, are induced through the interposing medium of a mechanical contrivance; their effectiveness for persuasion and action is thereby correspondingly diminished.





CHAPTER VI  
VERBAL PERSUASION.



## CHAPTER VI

### VERBAL PERSUASION

CONVERSATION, SALESMANSHIP,  
ADVERTISEMENTS, NEWSPAPERS.

**V**ERBAL persuasion may be either written or spoken. While the purpose of each of those kinds is the same, they differ to some extent in their constituent elements. In written persuasion the intellectual element is sometimes more predominant, and there is less scope for the operation of the non-rational elements. In spoken persuasion, on the other hand, the speaker may influence his hearers unconsciously, and more intimately and subtly, by his personality, and he has at his command the resources of gesture and bodily action, which are not available in written persuasion. Speech, enabling us to bring more fully into play all the elements of persuasion, may be considered to be its most characteristic and appropriate medium.

All conversation contains some of the elements of persuasion. When people talk merely for fun, or to pass the time, or to make themselves agreeable, or disagreeable, to others, even then a persuasive and personal influence passes reciprocally

among the talkers. And there are other kinds of conversation in which we aim directly at modifying the opinions and conduct of others, when our main object is to persuade: as in conversation on scientific, social, economic, political, or religious subjects. In every kind, the qualities that promote most effectively alike good conversation and sound persuasion are the speakers' personal qualities of temperament and character. If we are to be persuasive in talk, we must, above all, be in sympathy with human nature, and have a natural liking and zest for its varied qualities and manifestations (even for its irrationality and perverseness), enjoying the give-and-take of personal human intercourse. This is perhaps especially true of the less serious forms of conversation that have no definitely persuasive object; but it applies to every form.

The Irish people, in general, possess a natural gift for conversation, and the reasons for this are delightfully described in the following passage from a recently published volume of essays:—“The great factor in the Irish education is not the school, but the Irish home, unique in its combination of small means, intellect, and ambition with conversation. Without this conversation the home would not be Irish. From every manor-house and cabin ascends the incense of pleasant talk; it is that in which we most excel. With us all journeys end in talkers' meeting; ‘we are the greatest talkers since the Greeks’, said Oscar Wilde. When any Irish reform is proposed—and they are innumerable—I always ask: *How will it affect our conversation?* France has her art and literature,

England her House of Lords, and America her vast initiative; we have our conversation. We watch impatiently for the meals because we are hungry and thirsty for conversation; not for argument's sake or to improve ourselves, but because we spontaneously like one another. We like human voices and faces and the smiles and gestures and all the little drama of household colloquy, varying every moment from serious to gay, with skill, with *finesse*; we like human nature for its own sake, and we like it vocal—that is why we talk; we even like our enemies, on the Irish principle that it is 'better to be quarrelsome than lonesome'. Arthur Symonds, staying in a pilot's cottage in the west of Ireland, said to my daughter: 'I don't believe these people ever go to bed'. No; they have so much to say to one another".<sup>1</sup>

Good talk, like right persuasion, is animated by respect for, and sympathy with, the humanity and the individuality of others. At the same time, this sympathy should be regulated and controlled: otherwise, in serious conversation, it is apt to lead us to assent to propositions and beliefs with which we do not really agree, or to be turned too easily from the point at which we aim. In conversation on serious subjects, if our persuasion is to be effective, we must speak from conviction, and possess a certain amount of confidence, self-assertion, and determination. But those qualities, again, must not be too pronounced; in any ordinary discussion, we should have at least sufficient sympathy with our company to enable us to under-

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, Irish and American.* By John Butler Yeats. Talbot Press: 1918.

stand and appreciate rightly their mental tendencies or habits of thought and feeling ; on that sympathy, mainly, we must rely to bring those whom we address into any agreement with us on the points at issue. Among people who do not understand one another, or who have absolutely no interests in common, conversation is either impossible or a mere formality. Mutual consideration for and understanding of one another, and a certain unity of endeavour throughout—these, with sincerity, are the fundamental qualities that underlie good conversation, as well as right persuasion, of any kind.

How often, on the other hand, in the conversations we hear around us, we may observe the working of quite opposite qualities, of the qualities characteristic of false persuasion ! Disregard for the personality of others, duplicity of purpose, saying one thing and meaning another, innuendo, talking at instead of to a person, the use of false and fantastic analogies, and of deliberately misleading arguments—all those features of false persuasion are very commonly encountered in conversation. Like most of the marks of false persuasion, they are antisocial in their tendency, prompted by interested, selfish, and mean motives ; they do not promote unity, but increase the differences between people ; and they frequently proceed from the unconscious desire, by which we are all at times possessed, to assert in some way, however petty or illusory, our superiority over others.

A form of conversation in which all of us take part, on one side or the other, is that between the customer and the shopman over the counter. In

this kind of conversation it is the shopman who assumes the active rôle of persuasion, a rôle which the modern ideal of "efficiency" has elevated to the dignity of an art, the number of the arts having grown apace of late—whole volumes have been written, chiefly in America, on what is called "the art of salesmanship".

As a persuader, the salesman must be admitted to stand in a difficult position. His motives are suspect from the beginning. That blandness and amiability of manner, that extreme deference to the customer's wishes, that manifest desire to please—what else are these, we may say to ourselves, than carefully calculated methods of impression to enable him to realise his object? And yet in many instances his manner is of quite another kind. Probably from a consciousness of his equivocal position in the customer's eyes, he may assume the bluff and forthright manner, or the distinguished and high-and-haughty manner, the 'take-it-or-leave-it-just-as-you-like' attitude, highly developed, for instance, in many of the waiters in fashionable restaurants, who are sometimes rather alarming. But, whatever manner the vendor of wares may assume, no matter how carefully he may modulate and differentiate his style to meet the case of the individual customer, his motives are apt to be suspected. That suspicion, however, may be considered to be not quite justifiable or fair. Some of the large London stores, aware of the customer's feeling, devote, from time to time, columns of advertisements to the task of dissipating it: the tradesman's interest, it is pointed out, is the customer's interest, and, so far from being out

merely for gain, the firm desires to perform conscientiously a necessary social service for the benefit of its clients. In this contention there is a great deal of truth. For one thing, it is not, as a rule, to the salesman's real interests to recommend inferior wares; and again, we are undoubtedly apt to forget that the customer, too, has his duties in relation to the salesman, who is also a man and a brother.

The books that have been written on salesmanship would no doubt agree with the remark that the successful salesman must be quick in perception—a connoisseur, in his way, of men and women—able to read them for his purposes at a glance, and to modify his treatment of them accordingly. His success as a salesman depends upon his ability to influence individual customers, to whose more or less vaguely felt wants or desires he may, on occasion, add definiteness and strength and purpose, leading them to perceive a direct relationship between themselves and the action he has in view. That is obviously true of the persuasion of the salesman, but the same principle holds good in all persuasion. Public speakers often fail in their purpose simply because, while they express sentiments that may be vaguely and generally accepted as true, they sound no note that appeals specifically to the individuals they are addressing. The advocate in the law-courts knows better: in seeking to persuade a jury, he takes particular notice of, and addresses himself implicitly to, its members as individuals. A writer on the art of advocacy advises the budding barrister that “the first thing to do is to pick out from amongst the



twelve 'honest men and true' the man who seems to you to be the most intelligent, and who appears to take the most interest in the case. Your whole object should now be to *capture him*. . . . But you must not leave the other eleven gentlemen out in the cold, because if they think you are taking no notice of them, they, decent men as they are, will be hurt and feel slighted at you, a learned limb of the law, giving them no notice".<sup>1</sup> The main object of the salesman, too, is to "capture" his client; and to achieve his purpose he must apply discretion and good judgment, adapting his words and manner to the customer's personality. Above all, remembering that the public are only too ready to impute to him exclusively interested motives, he should not be obtrusive: in some customers, such an attitude would at once arouse 'contrariant' ideas, hostile forces with which persuasion of every kind frequently has to reckon.

Advertisement is similar to salesmanship in many respects as a form of persuasion. The ordinary trade advertisement seeks, as a rule, to stimulate and reinforce in individuals some generally felt want or need, and it is prompted, primarily, by the desire for gain. As being written, however, and not spoken, advertisements afford less scope for the exercise of the more personal qualities that may appear in salesmanship. On the other hand, they are more completely, if more formally, organised, and may employ as signs pictures as well as words. They embody, in miniature, all the elements,

<sup>1</sup> *Forensic Eloquence; or, The Eloquence of the Bar.*  
By P. J. Cooke (of the Middle Temple). London: 1897.

and exemplify many of the principles and methods, of written persuasion generally.

The aim of most advertising is to induce the reader to buy some particular commodity ; but in recent years its scope has been greatly enlarged. The " advertising agent " is now dubbed a " publicity expert ", and he is held to be qualified not only to help traders to sell their wares, but to propagate ideas on questions of public and national interest, to assist, for example, a local authority to carry on a campaign against a public abuse or danger, or a political party to persuade the electors, or the State itself to appeal to its individual members. In this country, some of the " publicity campaigns " that were initiated during the War by Government Departments led to remarkable practical results, demonstrating conclusively the efficacy of advertisement as a means of persuasion.

With a view to illustrating certain characteristics of advertisement generally, the following typical sentences may be quoted from a lengthy advertisement issued by the Ministry of National Service in 1917 :—

**" NATIONAL SERVICE : INDUSTRIAL ARMY :**  
1917.—Defeat the enemy's attempt to starve you.  
. . . Place yourselves—free men and uncompelled  
—at the disposal of National Service. . . Britain  
**MUST** become as nearly self-supporting as possible.  
. . . Help to bring a speedy peace by releasing fit men to fight. Enrol to-day. Go **NOW**—  
apply at the nearest Post-Office or National Service  
Office for Voluntary Service Form—and sign it  
**NOW.**"

It has been stated in Chapter I that the process of persuasion always starts from a belief or wish in the speaker's or writer's mind. In this instance the writer's persuasions set out from the belief or wish that as many men as possible should volunteer for national service.

Underlying this belief were certain sentiments and tendencies which the writer sought to arouse also in his readers: the individualistic instinct of self-preservation, threatened by the possible curtailment of food-supplies; the sentiment of patriotism; anger at Germany's declaration of war on the sea-traffic of the world; moral indignation at her disregard of law and humanity; and fear of the consequences. Those emotional tendencies formed the motive-power and directing force of all the writer's persuasions, and he sought to induce them in his readers, as being fitted to lead to the desired action.

A more intellectual element also appears: the writer supports his case by simple arguments. Men who volunteer, he says, will be fulfilling a patriotic duty, since they will be helping to avert starvation and defeat the enemy; and their action will also assist in bringing peace more quickly.

In the formal expression of the advertisement the most conspicuous features are the simple, direct, and striking style of presentation, the use of bold type to emphasise the need for immediate action, the repetition of such suggestive words as "the Enemy", and the frequent employment of urgent and imperative phrases—"defeat the Enemy's attempt to starve you", "*Britain must*

become self-supporting", "Place yourselves at the disposal of National Service", "Help to bring a speedy peace", "Enrol to-day", "Sign now". This use of the direct and imperative form of address is in accordance with the principle noted above, that in all effective persuasion a definitely personal note must be struck: the appeal must be driven home to each of the individuals addressed. In any form of national propaganda this principle is specially important, for, while we all acknowledge certain social or national duties that are incumbent on us, our acknowledgment of them is often merely passive and implicit: the publicist's function, then, in making national propaganda, is to transmute the vague and general recognition of duty to the State into a particular purpose tending to definite and individual action—he must lead each of his readers to perceive a direct relationship between himself and the obligation predicated.

Ordinary trade advertisements illustrate the same principles and methods. They appeal, however, mainly to individualistic instincts and tendencies, and their essential aim is the gain of the advertiser. Here again the imperative is frequently the mood; and as the appeal made is often to primitive tendencies, such as the need of food and drink, or the desire for health and enjoyment, little is required in the way of argument to enforce it. But particular instances of the beneficial results produced by the wares advertised, or testimonies of approval, are often cited. The most common form of "argument" in advertisement is merely strong assertion, which by frequent repetition exercises in itself a suggestive and persuasive

power. Humorous illustrations and letter-press are used to attract and please, and superlatives abound—a feature especially noticeable in American advertisements, but found everywhere. In a tube lift in London there appeared recently advertisements of three *revues*, one being described as “The Super Revue”, another as “The Most Stupendous Revue ever Produced”, and the third as “The Greatest of all Revues”—“the amusing part of it”, commented a cynical observer in a newspaper paragraph, “is that all three come from the same factory. It recalls, with a difference, the story of the three photographers in a Manchester Street. One called himself ‘The Best Photographer in Manchester’, another ‘The Best Photographer in Great Britain’, but the third, having (probably through seeing so many revues) wit, simply said ‘The Best Photographer in this Street.’”

In the writing of advertisements, as in all persuasion, certain immediate objects should be kept in view: the reader's attention must be caught; it must be held, the impression first made must be fixed; and the desired response must be evoked. Mechanical devices are sometimes employed for catching the reader's attention, as in advertisements exhibited on huge or isolated hoardings, or when letterpress or pictures are shown in motion. Such devices, while they are useful for making an immediate impression, do little to sustain the attention. For the attainment of this end, appeals to the reader's interest by means of novelty of expression or idea, pictorial illustration, and, above all, by the stimulation of a fundamental instinct or established habit, are not only less

meretricious in themselves, but more effective.

An interesting question that arises in connection with the reading-matter and pictorial illustrations is whether or not these should always be closely related, in their meaning, to the wares advertised. As a matter of fact, both the letterpress and the pictures of advertisements are often irrelevant, in the sense that they are not inherently related to the articles advertised, but are intended merely to catch the attention, or to arouse a pleasant feeling. Thus, an advertisement may begin by setting forth, in large type, some striking statement that has no connection with the real subject-matter; or it may tell a humorous story, merely to please, or portray a pretty face or a comical situation, equally unconnected with the articles advertised. Letterpress and pictures of this kind serve a useful purpose in so far as they associate the advertiser's wares with a pleasant feeling; but their effect on the reader's attention is apt to be momentary, and they do little to provoke the desired response. A clever advertisement of a play called "The Chinese Puzzle" may be mentioned, as illustrating how pictorial illustration may be combined effectively with relevant words. The advertisement shows the figure of a Chinaman, drawn with his back to the spectator, and clad in typical Chinese garb, carrying a fan and a parasol so placed that the whole of the upper part of the body is concealed; round the rim of the parasol appears the title of the play, "The Chinese Puzzle", symbolised by the figure's posture and dress, while above is written in large letters—"Puts all other plays in the shade". Such a combination of words

and pictorial illustration significantly related to each other through their common relation to the subject-matter is more likely (other factors, such as pleasantness of feeling-tone, being equal) to catch and retain the attention, and to lead to practical results, than any combination of irrelevant words and pictures.

For fixing an impression once it has been made, and sustaining attention, as well as for provoking the response, the most effective means is to appeal to some general need or tendency that will be satisfied by the particular article advertised. Many advertisements therefore begin with this appeal, giving prominence to the specific utility or desirability of the article, and afterwards connecting with this statement of utility the particular brand or article, in such a way as to dispose the reader to buy it, and not other articles of a similar kind.

Some interesting experiments have been made with a view to testing the relative value of the instincts and tendencies to which advertisers most frequently appeal. In one instance a set of twenty advertisements, based on actual advertisements of breakfast foods, was prepared, and submitted to fifty undergraduate and graduate students, who were asked to put them in order of merit as regards their persuasive power. The winning advertisement was as follows: "Prepared in *clean* kitchens, by *clean* people, with *clean* equipment. Guaranteed under the Pure Food Law of June 30, 1906. Thousands of visitors annually witness its preparation in our *model* kitchens". "The appeals made in the advertisements", says the experimenter, "ranked in the result in the following order: 'Cleanliness'

is clearly first; 'Doctor's recommendation', clearly second; 'an Aid to Success in Life', 'Taste', and 'Health' tie for third place; 'Sold by Reliable Firm', 'Recommendation of Roosevelt', and 'Cheap' tie for fourth place; then follow 'Process of Manufacture', 'Sold Everywhere', 'Patronise Home Industry', 'Royalty', 'Magnificent Factory', and finally 'Souvenir Spoon', which is clearly last".<sup>1</sup>

The value of such experiments is limited by the fact that they must conform to the prearranged conditions of experiment, and that the cases with which they deal are merely hypothetical—the order in which a group of navvies would have ranked the advertisements would, no doubt, have been quite different. Yet the experiments have not only thrown light on the relative value of some of our simpler instincts and tendencies, but have also been useful as demonstrating that advertisement is more likely to be successful when it is in accordance with the laws of suggestion generally. For instance, if a suggestion appears to come spontaneously from within, and not in response to some obvious external stimulus, it is more likely to be acted upon. Many advertisements, therefore, are now written in the form of supposititious newspaper articles, discussing the relations generally of business firms to their clients, or even current questions of taste, politics, or economics, and unobtrusively and artfully connecting those discourses with the

<sup>1</sup> v. "The Relative Merit of Advertisements: a Psychological and Statistical Study". By Edward K. Strong, Ph.D. Archives of Psychology, No. 17. New York: the Science Press.



name of the firm from which the advertisement emanates. By this means the blatant tones of the advertising trumpet are subdued, and contrariant ideas are less likely to be aroused. The frequent repetition of an advertisement produces something of the same effect. When the same advertisement has stared a person in the face from all the hoardings and newspapers in the country, the suggestion that it makes presently becomes so familiar that it seems to proceed entirely from himself, and he is therefore more likely, at some time or other, to act upon it.

Like every other kind of persuasion, advertisement is liable to degeneration and often seeks to exploit our common mental defects and frailties. All the time, the advertiser is out to make money ; and people so preoccupied are not likely always to be perfectly scrupulous or delicate in the means they employ. He addresses himself to the multitude. His aim is to capture as many as possible, and he therefore appeals often to the pettier desires and emotions, knowing that, if he only vaunts effectively the claims of his wares to be considered as fashionable, or gentlemanly, or socially advantageous, or bohemian, or sporty, or up-to-date, etc., etc., he will always attract some moths to his candle. The very compression of form incident to advertisement leads naturally to sensationalism and exaggeration. In the confinement of a limited space there is no room for the operation of the more gradual methods of true persuasion. Immediately striking methods, rather, are those that are sought after : the exhibition of huge sky-signs, the defacement of the streets and houses (and even the fields) by

huge and ugly posters, exaggerated misstatement, super-smartness and familiarity of phrase, impudent appeals to credulity and vanity. Mr. H. G. Wells, in his fantasy, *The Sleeper Awakes*, describes the state of affairs to which he considers the baser tendencies of modern advertising may lead. The "sleeper", Graham, awakened two hundred years hence, is traversing "the religious quarter" of London, when "his attention was vividly arrested by the façade of one of the Christian Sects. . . . It was covered with inscriptions from top to base, in vivid white and blue, save where a vast and glaring cinematographic transparency presented a realistic New Testament scene, and where a vast festoon of black, to show that the popular religion followed the popular politics, hung across the lettering. Graham had already become familiar with the phonotype writing, and these inscriptions arrested him, being to his sense for the most part almost incredible blasphemy. Among the less offensive were 'Salvation on the First Floor and turn to the Right', 'Put your Money on your Maker'. 'The Smartest Conversion in London, Expert Operators! Look Slippery!' 'What Christ would say to the Sleeper:—Join the Up-to-date Saints!' 'Be a Christian—without hindrance to your present Occupation'. 'All the Brightest Bishops on the Bench to-night and Prieests as Usual'. 'Brisk Blessings for Busy Business Men'.—'But this is appalling!' said Graham, as that deafening scream of mercantile piety towered above them.—'What is appalling?' asked his little officer, apparently seeking vainly for anything unusual in this shrieking enamel.—'This! Surely the essence of religion

is reverence'.—'Oh, *that!*' Asano looked at Graham. 'Does it shock you?' he said in the tone of one who makes a discovery. 'I suppose it would, of course. I had forgotten. Nowadays the competition for attention is so keen, and people simply haven't the leisure to attend to their souls, you know, as they used to do'. Proceeding through the streets, Graham enters a public dining-hall, where the people are sitting at tables made of a solid substance having the appearance and texture of damask, and "patterned with gracefully designed trade advertisements"; and he subsequently visits a public crèche, where he observes with much wonder "the wet nurses, a vista of mechanical figures, with arms, shoulders, and breasts of astonishingly realistic modulation, but mere brass tripods below, and having in the place of features a flat disc bearing advertisements likely to be of interest to mothers".

There may be noted also here another characteristic of modern advertising, which, indirectly, leads to prejudiced and false persuasion. Before the War, the principal newspapers of the country were dependent for their revenue mainly on advertisements, which enabled the proprietors to produce a paper that actually cost more to print than the price at which it was sold. This being the case, they found it expedient to refrain from advocating opinions that might affect adversely the interests of the wealthy advertiser. The largest and most prosperous newspapers were pro-capitalist in their opinions, and tended to resist any policy that favoured the interests of the employees rather than of the employers. Similarly, the large advertisers

would not advertise in anti-capitalist newspapers, and thus, indirectly, they were able to mould public opinion, by what may be considered illegitimate pressure, in an approved capitalistic pattern. The conditions of the War, however, to some extent modified this tendency, and diminished the advertiser's power over public opinion. The scarcity of paper compelled the newspaper proprietor to curtail his advertising space, and the cry of economy obliged the vendors of many useless or worthless wares to refrain from publicly advertising their designs on the pockets of the public. Those conditions favoured also a less lavish and garish style of advertisement: the expensive mechanical devices of lighted transparencies, and huge coloured posters, have in recent years been seen more rarely, and the deencies of good taste and good feeling have been less often violated. But this state of affairs is merely a temporary phase: the advertiser will now, no doubt, reassert his influence and power, and the baser tendencies of advertising resume their old sway.

The influence exercised by the advertiser upon the opinions and policy of newspapers is only one indication of the general commercialisation of the press that has taken place since the beginning of the twentieth century. Commercial considerations now affect the conduct of newspaper enterprise to a much larger extent than they did before that time. Most newspapers are owned by limited companies, responsible to their shareholders and passing from one owner or group of shareholders to another like any other business concern. For this reason the proprietors are less likely to be

animated by the sense of holding a public trust, a sense which should be always highly developed in those who control the sources of public information. It happens not infrequently that a newspaper is sold to an owner or group of owners whose political and social opinions are diametrically opposed to those of their predecessors and whose sole object in the transaction is to acquire a powerful engine of propaganda. Such a transaction might be held to imply some want of principle on the part of the sellers ; but ordinarily, apart from that consideration, and from a purely business point of view, perhaps little objection could be made to it. A case occurred recently, however, in which the Government itself was accused of having, indirectly, entered into negotiations for the acquisition of a great newspaper property.<sup>1</sup> An arrangement of this kind would, of course, stand on quite another footing from an ordinary business transaction, and in such a case the public could rightly claim that a parliamentary enquiry should be held, and that the transaction should be declared illegal. We have seen lately, in Germany, the evil effects that arise from a close collaboration of Government and Press. In that country, before the War, the Government had an official organ and a semi-official organ, and every department had its Press Bureau and its news editor. The consequence of this was that during the War the German people had no idea of the real motives or aims of their Government, and, further, that they were kept in ignorance of the actual results of the fighting : the rapidity with which events developed towards the

<sup>1</sup> v. Debate in the House of Commons, Oct. 15, 1918.

end of the War was in large measure due, no doubt, to the sudden disillusionment of the German people when it became no longer possible to conceal from them the real state of affairs.

The need for the rapid mechanical production and distribution of newspapers—another aspect of their commercialisation—has also tended to deteriorate their quality as instruments of persuasion. Since a newspaper with a large circulation must now be reproduced in millions of copies, and distributed rapidly throughout a wide area, the journalist is obliged to work at high pressure. “Instead of three hours for a considered version of facts or opinion”, says Mr. G. Binney Dibblee, “the modern writer is often given fifteen minutes, in which to turn out a smart distortion. The more a man can resemble a linotype machine the more useful will he be to the paper of to-morrow. He must of course be complicated in organisation, his mechanism must be ingenious enough to conceal his mental subordination. But, just as the pressing of any key on the composing board brings down always the same letter, so will it be required from the brilliant, up-to-date journalist of the millenium, that he must react automatically with the most faithful resemblance to the accuracy of a machine to each stimulus afforded by varying events, popular emotions, and the ideas of the market-place”.<sup>1</sup>

In the near future, the distribution of newspapers will probably be effected to a large extent by flying machines. This prospect raises the

<sup>1</sup> *The Newspaper*. By G. Binney Dibblee, M.A. London: Williams and Norgate.

question whether newspaper production, and the consequent control of the sources of public information, will not then be monopolised by a few powerful and wealthy groups able to organise the distribution from large centres, and tending to use their power to promote special group interests rather than the interests of the community. Even at the present time there exist several great newspaper 'combines' which wield immense power and influence; but the coming of aerial distribution will be likely to strengthen this already strongly marked tendency to combination. Such a growth of group-interests in newspapers may be considered to be in some respects undesirable, or even dangerous, for it must be admitted that the exclusive control of the sources of public information by a few wealthy groups would not be consistent with the conditions of a truly democratic state.





CHAPTER VII

FORMAL PERSUASION IN SPEECHES  
AND BOOKS



## CHAPTER VII

### FORMAL PERSUASION IN SPEECHES AND BOOKS

**W**E have now to consider verbal persuasion as an organised form of expression, for the propagation of political, social, economic, legal, aesthetic, moral, or religious ideas, in written articles, speeches, and books. Its constituent elements correspond with those of persuasion regarded as a mental process: there are in it three main elements, the intellectual, the imaginative, and the emotional, each of which combines and fuses with the others so as to produce a distinctive form of expression. The speaker or writer whose aim is to persuade must not only convince his hearers or readers intellectually, he must also stimulate their imaginative faculty, and stir them to action by appealing to the emotions and sentiments.

The intellectual element, in so far as its function is to convince others of the truth of the propositions advanced, appears mainly in the form of argument. All arguments may be classified as belonging to either of two kinds, deductive or inductive: a speaker or writer must argue either from general

principles or from facts. When we argue *à priori* from the nature of the case, we employ the deductive method. In seeking to establish a proposition, therefore, it is sometimes a useful plan to ask ourselves : What arguments, if any, may be advanced from the nature of the case ? For instance, in support of the proposition that all civilised nationalities, distinctly defined as nationalities by natural geographical boundaries and by racial affinity, should possess the right of self-determination in government, we might assert that, from the nature of the case, disputes and warfare must inevitably arise when they do not possess that right. On the other hand, in this instance, we might proceed by citing particular cases in which nations ruled by another and alien nation had actually rebelled and disturbed the peace of the world—this would be to proceed by the method of induction, in which we argue from facts or particular cases. The method of deduction is most useful when we may take for granted that those we address will be in agreement with us on the subject of the general principle asserted ; while the method of induction is generally the more effective if the proposition to be established is unfamiliar to them, or likely to be distasteful. But both principles and facts are necessary ; and, in actual discourse, they are used together in a combined method of deduction and induction.

Until comparatively recently, and even now, the tendency of discussion, in all human affairs, has been predominatingly deductive. The politician, the political economist, the social reformer, the lawyer, the preacher, have each their set of general

principles which they apply to the solution of particular questions. This procedure, within limits, is perfectly legitimate: within every sphere of thought and discussion there exist certain general principles that are valid. But, especially in popular persuasion, the tendency has been to apply principles hastily and without adequate examination of the particular facts of the case—this mode of procedure saves time and trouble. The conservative politician tends to assume that any policy that appears, on the face of it, to be inimical to the present constitution of Church and State must necessarily be a bad policy; and the theologian assumes that, for instance, the present laws of marriage, being based on fundamental and necessary Christian principles, have a compelling and permanent validity. Assumptions of this kind are likely to lead to the neglect of lately arisen factors in a situation and to stand in the way of progress. The typical ‘professional’ outlook, in every field—politics, law, religion, etc.—is particularly apt to be distorted by this undue reliance on general principles. The speeches of a party leader, or of a judge in the law courts, or of a clergyman in the pulpit, will nearly always be found to rest, ultimately, on principles that are assumed to be applicable, as a matter of course, to the particular cases under discussion: the circumstance that the conditions of life are constantly changing, and that principles that were generally applicable ten or fifty or a hundred years ago may now no longer be applicable, is neglected. The man who, in a discussion, declares dogmatically that all his arguments are based on unalterable

principles is a man whom we may be permitted to distrust: very often his professions are merely an excuse for his failure, deliberate or otherwise, to examine the facts of the case properly. James I possessed a considerable aptitude for political speculation, and his theories were based upon principles. "He tried", says Professor Pollard, "to reduce monarchy to a logical system, and to enforce the system as practical politics."<sup>1</sup> The results of those theories were not disastrous to James personally, but they proved disastrous to his successor, who followed the same lines of reasoning. On the other hand, as Professor Pollard remarks in another passage, "Parliament had realised that in politics principles consist of details as a pound consists of pence; and that, if it wanted sound legislative principles, it must take care of the details of administration." Throughout the ages, the method of deduction has always been the strong buttress of tradition and authority, which have often been the most powerful foes of progress and truth. And the efficacy of deductive methods of persuasion has been greatly aided by man's peculiar responsivity to this species of appeal, which saves him from the labour of detailed enquiry and thought. The orator and the tub-thumper, who play on our prepossessions, give us only that for which we crave. All our ideas and beliefs tend to become crystallised and to express themselves in the form of abstract terms and propositions—these are coins convenient for currency, and we are apt to forget, because it is expedient to forget, that they have been set in a stereotyped

<sup>1</sup> *History of England* (Williams & Norgate).

mould. At the present time, in politics, if a man characterises a proposal as 'undemocratic' he is supposed to have damned it at a stroke; or, in the sphere of education, which is now theoretically accepted as being of some importance, if a policy is described as being likely to promote industrial productivity, it is assumed, almost as a matter of course, that the policy is worthy of acceptance. Persuasions of this kind rest on the assumption of general principles which may or may not be warranted.

The most common form of the inductive method is the argument from an example or examples, or, as it is sometimes called, induction by simple enumeration, in which we proceed from the enumeration of one or more cases to the statement of a general proposition. Thus, to establish the statement that Germany during the progress of the War broke recognised international laws and employed methods of warfare that had previously been considered unjustifiable, a list of particular instances, with details of place and date, would have to be cited.

A second species of inductive argument is induction based on a causal relationship. In this kind of argument the inference may proceed either from cause to effect or from effect to cause. From the circumstance, acting as a cause, that during the last fifty years Germany had found war to be a paying business, resulting in an increase of territory, wealth, and power, we might infer as an effect the recent War; or, vice-versa, we might reason from the effect, the War, to the gains of Germany in previous wars as a predisposing cause.

A third kind of induction is the argument from analogy, in which we draw a direct inference from one instance to a similar instance. Thus Burke, in his speech on Conciliation with America, draws an analogy between the situation of Ireland and Wales in the past and that of the American colonies, and infers that a policy of conciliation ought to be pursued. As soon as Ireland was allowed the privileges of the English Constitution she became peaceful and prosperous. Up to the reign of Henry VIII the Welsh people had no share in English liberties, and their country was in a state of perpetual disorder; but when they were given the rights and privileges of English subjects, "from that moment, as by a charm, the tumults subsided, obedience was restored, peace, order, and civilisation followed in the train of liberty."

None of those three kinds of inductive argument, as they are used in ordinary discourse, can afford absolute proof, but demonstrate only a greater or less degree of probability, according to the observation of certain conditions varying with each of the kinds.<sup>1</sup> The methods of induction cannot be applied rigorously in the discussion of human affairs; they are applicable, in their strictness, only in the discovery and explanation of scientific facts and laws relating to inanimate nature. The subject-matter of persuasion, whether political, social, economic, legal, moral, or religious, is

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed treatment of the various kinds of argument and the conditions of their validity, the reader may be referred to a little book of the present writer's, entitled *How to Argue Successfully: a Study of the Principles and Methods of Argument* (George Routledge & Sons).



generally too complex, and the manifestations of human nature are too uncertain, to admit of scientific proof. From the speaker or writer on human affairs we should expect only that degree of proof of which his subject-matter may be capable. For instance, a scientist may often explain the behaviour of natural phenomena by reference to a general law; but, in suggesting legislation to regulate the action of human beings as members of a State, a politician in his speeches can hardly hope to base his proposals on any universal law of human nature; he must be satisfied with some approximate generalisation that will be applicable to the conditions, not of all, but of the greater number of, the people for whom the legislation is intended. The scientist attains a more rigid degree of proof because he is able to use the method of experiment; but the complexity and uncertainty of the material with which the politician has to deal, and the dangerous results that might follow, make it impossible for him to experiment to any appreciable extent. "From the nature of the Inductive Methods," says Mr. Carveth Read, "it is plain that in such a complex and tangled situation as history presents a satisfactory employment of them is rarely possible; for they all require the actual or virtual isolation of the phenomenon under investigation. They also require the greatest attainable immediacy of connexion between cause and effect, whereas the causes of social events may accumulate during hundreds of years." <sup>1</sup> The statement that "there

<sup>1</sup> *Logic, Deductive and Inductive.* By Carveth Read, M.A. (Alexander Moring.)

are two sides to every question" applies pre-eminently to the subjects of ordinary discourse. The speaker's or writer's task is to make *his* side of the question—the theory or policy that *he* advances—appear as plausible and true to his audience as it does to himself; but it is only rhetorical, not scientific, truth that he can demonstrate. It must be recognised, then, that the inductive methods of logic are applied in persuasion only in a rough fashion. If a subject under discussion is so complex and varied in its aspects that it cannot be investigated by a rigidly scientific method, obviously we must be content to apply induction only with that degree of strictness which the subject permits.

The imaginative element in persuasion as a form of expression appears in the frequent use of verbal illustrations and figures of speech, such as exemplification, analogy, anecdote, simile, metaphor, antithesis, climax, etc. Very often, however, it is impossible to draw any absolute distinction between argument and illustration. The logical value of many arguments, in books and speeches that aim at popular persuasion, amounts to little more than that of an illustration; and, vice-versa, many illustrations possess a certain amount of probative or logical value. The primary function of illustration, in writing or speaking, is to make clear some idea or proposition or plan that has been already presented to the reader or hearer, of which he has already some vague knowledge; and since no proposition can be proved, and no plan of action can be demonstrated to be advisable, unless a clear notion of it has first been presented or

formed, illustrations in discourse frequently help to produce the same effect of conviction as arguments. Further, since ideas tend to realise themselves in action according to the degree in which they are vividly conceived, illustration, as assisting in the formation of vivid ideas, has the additional value in persuasion that it tends to affect conduct and lead to the action that the speaker or writer desires. Again, illustrations not only impart clearness and vividness to ideas, they induce also in the hearer or reader a feeling of appreciation and enjoyment, an attitude of receptivity and acceptance: they work thus in alliance also with the emotional element in persuasion. Fundamentally considered, however, they are a function of the imagination rather than of the intellect or of emotion, and it may be said generally that, just as the intellectual element in persuasion appears mainly in the form of argument, so the imaginative element appears mainly in the form of illustration.

The following passage from a speech by John Bright contains a good instance of imaginative illustration. The speaker's main proposition was that an aggressive foreign policy necessarily absorbs a large proportion of the earnings of the people, and to illustrate it he remarked:—"I believe that I understate the sum when I say that, in pursuit of this Will-o'-the-wisp (the 'liberties of Europe' and the 'balance of power') there has been extracted from the industry of the people of this small island no less an amount than 2,000,000,000*l.* sterling. I cannot imagine how much 2,000,000,000*l.* is, and therefore I shall not attempt to make you comprehend it. . . . When

I try to think of that sum of 2,000,000,000*l.*, there is a sort of vision passing before my mind's eye. I see your peasant labourer delve and plough, sow and reap, sweat beneath the summer's sun, or grow prematurely old before the winter's blast. I see your noble mechanic, with his manly countenance and his matchless skill, toiling at his bench or his forge. I see one of the workers in our factories in the north, a woman—a girl, it may be—gentle and good, as many of them are, as your sisters and daughters are—I see her intent upon the spindle, whose revolutions are so rapid that the eye fails altogether to detect them, or watching the alternating flight of the unresting shuttle. I turn again to another portion of your population, which, 'plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made,' and I see the man who brings up from the secret chambers of the earth the elements of the riches and greatness of his country. When I see all this I have before me a mass of produce and of wealth which I am no more able to comprehend than I am that 2,000,000,000*l.* of which I have spoken, but I behold in its full proportions the hideous error of your Governments, whose fatal policy consumes in some cases a half, never less than a third, of all the results of that industry which God intended should fertilise and bless every home in England, but the fruits of which are squandered in every part of the surface of the globe, without producing the smallest good to the people of England."<sup>1</sup>

Comparison and contrast often afford useful illustrations in discourse. Their general function, like that of all illustration, is, in the first place,

<sup>1</sup> At Birmingham, October 29, 1858.

to emphasise and make clear, and, secondly, to add vividness and interest and variety. They are particularly useful because they enable a writer or speaker to repeat and drive home a statement without having recourse to mere repetition; and they often afford scope for wit and humour, which may be effective elements in persuasion. The main principle to be observed in the use of comparisons and contrasts is to describe what is not well known by what is better known, or by what appeals to the senses of sight, hearing, touch, or taste. Thus many useful and interesting comparisons and contrasts are provided by natural objects, the life of plants and animals, the processes of growth, and the occupations and amusements of human beings. As illustrations they correspond to the use of analogy in argument, and often cannot be easily distinguished from it. Analogy, however, consists rather in the citation of a parallel case or cases that have actually occurred, while comparisons and contrast may present an imaginary or invented situation with which an actual situation is compared or contrasted. Again, when we use analogy as an argument, it is incumbent on us to establish a closer degree of similarity in the relevant points than we need do in an illustrative comparison. Lord Brougham employed this species of illustration effectively when he contended, in his speech to the House of Lords on Negro Emancipation,<sup>1</sup> that if (as his opponents asserted) the negroes as a class had been found to be obdurate, dishonest, and insubordinate, this circumstance should be attributed to the cruelty with which

<sup>1</sup> Feb. 20, 1838.

they had been treated. "If some capricious despot," he said, "were, in the career of ordinary tyranny, to tax his pampered fancy to produce something more monstrous, more unnatural than himself; were he to graft the thorn upon the vine, or place the dove among vultures to be reared, much as we might marvel at this freak of a perverted appetite, we should marvel still more if we saw tyranny exceed even its own measure of proverbial unreasonableness, and complain because the grape was not gathered from the thorn, or because the dove so trained has a thirst for blood." A similar instance may be quoted from the Rt. Hon. Robert Lowe's speech in opposition to Parliamentary Reform.<sup>1</sup> His opponents had argued that if the franchise were extended there would be less bribery and corruption among the voters. To that contention Lowe replied as follows:—"It is said, Here is a disease; cure it, dilute its poison by admitting a large number to the franchise. Well, this would be a very good argument if health were catching as well as disease. If I had half-a-dozen diseased cattle, and I turned one hundred sound cattle among them, I might infect the new ones, but I do not think that I should do much good to the sick ones."

Another form of illustration based on the principle of resemblance is the anecdote, or brief story, in which a situation or state of affairs similar to the one under consideration is described, with a view to throwing light on the latter. In his speech on Foreign Policy, from which we have quoted above, John Bright argued that the expendi-

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, April 26, 1866.

ture of huge sums on armaments “ makes us ready to assume offence where none is intended,” and supported his argument by reference to the alarm that had been caused in this country by the building of fortifications at Cherbourg. He then narrated the following anecdote by way of illustration :—  
“ I recollect a friend of mine going down from Derby to Leeds in the train with a very quiet and respectable-looking gentleman sitting opposite to him. They had both been staying at the Midland Hotel, and they began talking about it. All at once the gentleman said, ‘ Did you notice anything particular about the bread at breakfast ? ’ ‘ No,’ said my friend, ‘ I did not.’ ‘ Oh ! but I did,’ said the poor gentleman, ‘ and I am convinced there was an attempt made to poison me, and it is a very curious thing that I never go to an hotel without I discover some attempt to do me mischief.’ The unfortunate man was labouring under one of the greatest calamities which can befall a human creature. But what are we to say of a nation which lives under a perpetual delusion that it is about to be attacked—a nation which is the most combined on the face of the earth, with little less than 30,000,000 of people all united under a Government which, though we intend to reform it, we do not the less respect it, and which has mechanical power and wealth to which no other country offers any parallel ? ”

The essential quality of a good illustrative anecdote is that it should be relevant to the case in point. To introduce an anecdote merely to amuse or divert, without establishing a direct relationship between it and the subject-matter

under consideration, is one of the arts of false persuasion. Illustrations, generally, are from their very nature adapted to arouse interest, and there is therefore a temptation to use them for the sake of their intrinsic interest, apart from any consideration as to their relevance. The false rhetorician, yielding to the temptation, cites examples that do not really come under the principle they are supposed to illustrate, and introduces comparisons and anecdotes that have merely a superficial or specious reference to the subject-matter.

As the imaginative element in persuasion finds its most obvious expression in illustrations and imaginative figures of speech, so the emotional element expresses itself in emotional figures, such as Interrogation, Exclamation, Apostrophe, Vision, Prediction, Denunciation, Appeal to God. The more violent of those figures, however, are nowadays employed less frequently: the oratory of our own time and country, for example, is much less explicitly emotional in character than that of, say, the eighteenth century: we are become more sophisticated—practised and pleased in the masking of emotion—so that the speaker of to-day finds it best, as a rule, to tune his note to a minor key. None the less, emotional figures of speech are still characteristic features of persuasion, and especially of spoken persuasion. The emotional element, indeed, in some form or other, must necessarily be present if persuasion is to be effective, for it is the driving-force that, having animated the speaker or writer throughout, must in its turn induce the hearer or reader to act in accordance with the beliefs advocated—without



emotion, no persuasion. When we wish to dissuade from a certain course of action, we are animated by, and try to arouse in others, sorrow, fear, shame, or humility; when our object is to persuade, we invoke feelings that will elevate the spirit and stimulate to action, such as hope, patriotism, ambition, emulation, anger; while those feelings that in themselves neither restrain us from acting nor incite us to act, but may be made conducive to either—as joy, love, esteem, compassion—are equally effective either for persuading or dissuading.

But, although all persuasion thus involves emotion, its ostensible and avowed purpose is to produce conviction by force of argument. If we would persuade others, we must avoid, as far as possible, the appearance of deliberately attempting to work upon their feelings. For this reason the emotional appeal of persuasion is made, in general, more or less indirectly, through the imagination and intellect. By communicating lively and glowing ideas of the subject we excite some desire or emotion in our auditors, and by exhibiting the subject in such relations that the emotion excited seems to be naturally inherent in it we satisfy their judgment that there is a connection between the action to which we would persuade them and the gratification of the desire or emotion.

Argument itself, which is an appeal to reason, may play no small part in the stimulation of emotion. This it does by inducing a sense of probability or of certainty, based on evidence, and begetting belief. If, in a legal case, the prosecuting counsel succeeds in convincing judge and jury of

an accused person's guilt, this belief, of itself, will stimulate their sense of duty and a feeling of resentment against the injurious act, and those feelings they may gratify by establishing a verdict against the prisoner. To invest the presentation of a case with an air of probability is, then, an effective means of exciting emotion indirectly.

Another means for the attainment of the same end is to make the presentation appear plausible, as distinct from probable. Plausibility is often confused with probability, but they are really different, though resembling one another in that both may be employed to enliven emotion or sentiment. The sense of probability is produced by argument, while plausibility is a quality that attaches to narration so constructed and coloured as to attract and persuade : as the former, therefore, pertains to the rational element in persuasion, so the latter pertains rather to the imaginative. When a narrative is coloured in such a way that the events described, and the order and relations in which they are exhibited, appear to be natural or inevitable, and in harmony with general experience, it is said to be plausible : the mind follows such a narrative with pleasure, and is disposed to accept it as true. On the other hand, if the narrative introduces a combination of ideas that runs counter to experience, the mind follows it with difficulty and is disposed to reject it as unnatural, incredible, or untrue. The mere plausibility of a narrative, apart from its probability, gives pleasure to the hearer or reader, and is persuasive ; so that, for instance, if we meet on the road a beggar who tells a plausible and

attractive tale of his undeserved misfortunes, we may be induced to help him, even while we doubt the truth of his story : in such a case persuasion effects its purpose through sheer plausibility. As appealing to the imagination, and imparting pleasure, plausibility is generally better fitted than probability to arouse emotions favourable to the end of persuasion ; but when definite facts are involved and important issues hang on the decision to be reached, as in a legal trial, probability must be considered to be more effective for this purpose than plausibility, which is often used to bolster up a weak case.

A third expedient that may be employed for the enlivening of emotion indirectly, through the intellect and imagination, is to emphasise the importance of the subject. By this means we fix the attention more closely, and add vividness and strength to the ideas, thus increasing, in turn, the force of the emotions aroused. If, for instance, we are able to represent the actions of an individual or a nation as peculiarly atrocious, and as involving important consequences and great suffering to a large number of people, the feeling of indignation that we intend to arouse in our auditors will be greatly increased.

Again, the narration of events that have happened recently, or that may be predicted as about to happen soon, will, other factors being equal, excite keener emotion than that of events that happened long since or are not likely to happen for a long time. And even more important in its effect upon emotion than proximity in time is connection of place. The events that happen

in our own country or the town in which we live are apt to affect us much more intimately than events that happen in distant regions. When, on one day, some incident of world-significance has occurred abroad, and another incident, of trifling import but affecting ourselves nearly and immediately, has occurred in the town where we live, on taking up the newspaper the next day, we are more likely, the statement may be hazarded, to turn to the account of the latter first—to read, for instance, in the first place, the account of the strike of omnibus and Tube employees, which may prevent or delay us in our journey to business, and then, with a more subdued urgency of feeling, to read the account of the world-shaking battles being fought abroad at the same time.

Another circumstance that should be considered in connection with the emotional appeal in persuasion is the relation of the writer or speaker, and of the incidents or actions he describes, to the persons addressed. Mark Antony, in Shakespeare's play, adroitly begins his address to the crowd in the forum with the words "Friends, Romans, countrymen"—each word, in a gradually ascending scale, implying, as if by right, a claim to sympathetic response from his auditors. An unjust or cruel action will be regarded with less indignation by those who are related to the actors than by those related to the sufferers: where a German, during the War, could easily find reasons or excuses for the destruction of French cathedrals and works of art, a Frenchman saw in such acts merely vandalism. If a speaker can demonstrate to his audience that they themselves are intimately concerned with

the effects of an action, he will evoke a more emotional response. We are so constituted that we feel more keenly that which affects us personally. In contemplating a wrong done to some one else, we feel indignation, certainly, but the feeling is not usually so acute as it is in the person who has been injured. In the former case the indignation implies resentment, or a desire to retaliate on the wrong-doer so far at least as to make him repent, while in the latter case the resentment is sometimes so strong that it might be more appropriately termed revenge. Similarly, the contemplation of a beneficent action naturally attracts the on-lookers to the benefactor, and induces a feeling of benevolence towards him, or a desire to promote his happiness; but in the person benefited this feeling may be so strong as to be more accurately termed gratitude. In dealing with actions that are bad or good respectively, a speaker or writer may intensify emotion, transmuting resentment to revenge, and benevolence to gratitude, by exhibiting the actions as, in their consequences, directly affecting the persons addressed. So Mark Antony, having aroused the benevolence of his hearers towards Cæsar, and their indignation against the conspirators, in his final appeal works up those feelings into the more acute feelings of gratitude and revenge, by announcing that Cæsar in his will has bequeathed a sum of money to every Roman citizen: the mob then rushes forth to satisfy its sense of gratitude and exact retribution by violent means, as the speaker had desired and calculated.

Wit and humour are often effective elements in

persuasion. They may be distinguished from one another, but there is no absolute separation between them. Their various forms are all akin, so that often it would be difficult to classify an instance as belonging specifically to one form or to another. In all their species, wit and humour are closely related alike to the intellectual, the imaginative, and the emotional elements in our nature—to the first in so far as they may produce an effect of conviction, to the second in so far as they involve imaginative comparison and give pleasure, and to the third in so far as they stimulate feeling. The effect of wit and humour depends, as a rule, on the union of apparently unrelated and incongruous ideas, in such a way as to produce pleasure and surprise. Humour, however, depends less upon surprise, and is more emotional, more kindly, more sympathetic than wit—Thackeray says that it is “wit and love,” Carlyle that its essence is “sensibility—warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence.” For this reason humour has less argumentative but more emotional value than wit: as a characteristic personal trait, it attracts us sympathetically to a speaker or writer. Wit, on the other hand, bears a closer relation to the actual subject-matter of persuasion; it appeals more exclusively to the intellect, and generally depends more upon surprise, and upon the particular mode of verbal expression employed. It is also, as an instrument of persuasion, sharper and more cutting than humour. This is especially the case when it appears in the forms of innuendo, ridicule, sarcasm, and irony. The nobleman who remarked in his will, “to my steward I have left

nothing, as he has been with me for the last fifteen years," expressed in a brief, pregnant, cutting, and witty phrase a criticism that would have been far less effectively expressed in a serious and more elaborate statement of his reasons.

In the following passage, from a speech by Lord Randolph Churchill,<sup>1</sup> ridicule and sarcasm are effectively employed :—" . . . Gentlemen, we live in an age of advertisement, the age of Holloway's pills, of Colman's mustard, and of Horniman's pure tea ; and the policy of lavish advertisement has been so successful in commerce that the Liberal party, with its usual enterprise, has adapted it to politics. The Prime Minister is the greatest living master of the art of personal political advertisement ; Holloway, Colman, and Horniman are nothing compared with him. . . . For the purpose of an autumn holiday a large transatlantic steamer is specially engaged, the Poet Laureate adorns the suite, and receives a pcegrage as his reward, and the incidents of the voyage are luncheon with the Emperor of Russia, and tea with the Queen of Denmark. For the purposes of recreation he has selected the felling of trees, and we may usefully remark that his amusements, like his politics, are essentially destructive. Every afternoon the whole world is invited to assist at the crashing fall of some beech or elm or oak. The forest laments in order that Mr. Gladstone may perspire, and full accounts of these proceedings are forwarded by special correspondents to every daily paper every recurring morning. . . . However, these remarks of mine are merely preliminary

<sup>1</sup> At Blackpool, Jan. 24, 1884.

to a couple of concluding political observations to which I am led by two of the Gladstonian advertisements which appeared in the papers the other day. The first described the journey of a deputation of working-men from the pure and immaculate borough of Chester to Hawarden Castle. It has always appeared to me somewhat incongruous and inappropriate that the great chief of the Radical party should reside in a castle. But to proceed. One would have thought that the deputation would have been received in the house, in the study, in the drawing-room, or even in the dining-room. Not at all. That would have been out of harmony with the advertisement 'boom.' Another scene had been arranged. The working-men were guided through the ornamental grounds into the wide-spreading park, strewn with the wreckage and the ruins of the Prime Minister's sport. All around them, we may suppose, lay the rotting trunks of once umbrageous trees; all around them, tossed by the winds, were boughs and bark and withered shoots. They come suddenly on the Prime Minister and Master Herbert, in scanty attire and profuse perspiration, engaged in the destruction of a gigantic oak, just giving its last dying groans. They are permitted to gaze and to worship and adore, and, having conducted themselves with exemplary propriety, are each of them presented with a few chips as a memorial of that memorable scene."

This passage illustrates well both the merits and the defects of ridicule and its allied forms as a method of persuasion. If we consider the passage critically, as it stands, its intrinsic value as argu-



ment must be pronounced to be small. The speaker attacks his opponent's political proposals on the ground that his opponent is "the greatest living master of the art of political advertisement": he argues to the wrong point, committing the fallacy that is termed in logic *ignoratio elenchi*, in the form of a personal argument, or *argumentum ad hominem*; he forgets, too, by the way, or chooses to forget, that sound goods, as well as unsound, may be advertised. But, as a matter of fact, how many of those who heard the speech would be affected by critical considerations of that sort? Presenting a subject not in the clear light of reason, but in the variegated colours of imagination, wit and humour in all their manifestations may be employed to amuse and divert an audience, distracting their attention, in the pleasure they receive, from a purely rational view. Ridicule, in particular, which is usually directed against persons, derives a large part of its effectiveness from the fact that it induces in those who hear or read it a petty feeling of superiority. Lord Randolph's presentation of the great Prime Minister of England in the guise of a Horniman or a Colman would not merely provoke the audience to laughter; for the moment it would (quite illusorily, no doubt) enable them to imagine themselves as posed, patron-like, in an attitude of superiority over the Prime Minister, surveying his movements with the amused smile of one who observes, with knowledge and joy, the antics of an inveterate advertiser playing for custom. Now, this feeling of superiority is much prized by most of us (the mere penning of this statement, for instance, *ex cathedra*, affords a

certain satisfaction to the writer) ; and to that fact is due part of the value for persuasion of wit, innuendo, ridicule, sarcasm, and irony, which stimulate it. Freud regards wit and humour as the release of suppressed wishes in the mind of the subject, and their expression as leading up to a similar release of suppressed wish in the person who reads or hears. One of the strongest and most common of suppressed wishes, in most people, is the wish to assert a superiority over others ; and any device that will gratify it must therefore be a potent and fertile source of appeal for the writer or speaker.

It must not be supposed, however, that the appeal of wit and humour in persuasion is merely meretricious—that they invariably obscure the point at issue, or stimulate petty and egoistic emotions : they may be used, indeed, like every element in persuasion, to hoodwink and deceive, but this is by no means always the case. Rightly used, they not only enliven the treatment of the subject-matter, but cast on it a truly revealing light ; and they are especially effective when we seek to expose the minor vanities and follies to which human nature is liable—its affectations and pretensions, its petty hypocrisies, its love of display, its boastfulness, its pedantry, its exclusiveness, its capacity for self-deception. They are superficially and meretriciously used only when they are introduced purely for their own sake, to arouse laughter, and have no essential relationship to the subject-matter under discussion. In the passage quoted from Lord Randolph Churchill's speech, as it stands above, no such relationship is established. But Lord Ran-

dolph Churchill, cynical as he was, was too able a speaker to make of his cynicism merely a vehicle of public laughter, and in the sentences that immediately follow the quotation he proceeds to link his previous observations to the essential point at issue. Having observed that each of the workingmen on the deputation had been presented with a few chips as a memento of their visit, he goes on to elaborate a clever comparison between the chips presented to the deputation and the fragmentary results of Mr. Gladstone's policy. Having amused and diverted the audience by his sarcastic sallies, he brings it back to the point at issue, using a witty similitude drawn from his previous remarks to sharpen and drive home the point—the raillery and ridicule in which he has indulged thus becomes incorporated with the warp and woof of the whole speech.

A particular form of ridicule that is sometimes used with great effect is irony, in which something different from, or opposite to, what is meant is said, in order to make the truth more effective by contrast. There is a lighter kind of irony, implying only disapproval or ridicule, in which we often indulge casually in conversation. But in its graver and more elaborate kinds irony implies bitterness of feeling, bitter indignation or contempt; it is a natural form of expression for the bitter in soul who are also imaginative. Where one person, dominated by emotion, might give vent, “in good set terms,” to a simple outburst of anger or indignation or contempt, the more imaginative and subtle spirit, while perhaps experiencing those feelings even more deeply, conceals them under a mask,

pleasing his own imagination and stimulating that of others. In sustained irony the speaker or writer assumes an air of arguing gravely in defence of that which he actually exposes as ridiculous or contemptible, so that his very dissimulation is dissembled. He desires that the mask should be seen through, and reveals what lies beneath by his manner or tone, and by the absurd consequences and embarrassments in which his personated character involves him. Considered as an argument, irony bears a close resemblance to the method known to mathematicians as the *reductio ad absurdum*. The effectiveness of irony in persuasion is strikingly shown in books of the type of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Wit and humour may be regarded as exemplifying in a typical manner the principles and methods of persuasion, in that they involve the co-operation and fusion of its three main elements, the intellectual, the imaginative, and the emotional. In persuasion as a form of expression those three elements always work together: no absolute distinction can be drawn between argument and illustration; they approximate to and merge in one another constantly, and the appeal to the emotions is made to a large extent indirectly, through the intellect and imagination. The product of that fusion, however, the particular form of the persuasion resulting from it, varies in different cases. In some kinds the intellectual element may predominate, as in a speech consisting mainly of argument; in other kinds the imaginative appeal may be more conspicuous; and in others the emotional; the relative predominance of the three elements being determined not only by the writer's or speaker's

personality, but, to a considerable extent, by the nature of the subject-matter.

The subject-matter of persuasion may be broadly classified as being of four kinds : political (including also social and economic subjects), legal, religious, and explanatory. The last-mentioned term must be understood as being wide in its application : it includes all those subjects, not essentially political, legal, or religious, that are treated in a popular style and contain the elements of persuasion. Under this head may be classed, for instance, such discourses as aim at interpreting the meaning of events, at enforcing the lessons of the past, at inaugurating new movements, commemorating the lives of great men, or simply at giving pleasure. They may be appropriately termed explanatory because the exposition and explanation of ideas is their essential and predominating object. It will be observed that no particular mention has been made of scientific subjects. In so far as these are treated in a popular style, and in such a way as to affect conduct, they belong to the last-mentioned class. But as treated theoretically, in lectures or books addressed to scientific experts, they do not belong in any sense to the subjects of persuasion ; and it may be remarked generally of any and every subject that the consideration of it from a purely theoretical or technical standpoint involves as a consequence its exclusion from the subject-matter of persuasion in the meaning attached to the term throughout this book.

The essential character of all persuasion is that it deliberately seeks to affect human conduct and action, and, as so doing, has a reference to the future.

According as this reference to action and the future is more or less direct and predominating, the elements of intellect, imagination, and emotion respectively tend to assume varying proportions in discourse.

The four forms of persuasion that we have enumerated—political, legal, religious, and explanatory,—differ from one another in the degree to which they seek to affect conduct. The statesman and politician, and the lawyer, often have in view a particular action to which they would persuade their auditors. The politician's aim may be to induce them to vote for his party or candidate, or to support some definite policy that he advocates; while the aim of the lawyer in court is to win judge and jury to his side, and to move them to such action as will enable him to gain his case. The preacher's theme, on the other hand, while it also is intimately concerned with action, and in the best sense of the word is supremely practical in tendency, is conduct generally rather than a particular action. In explanatory discourse the reference to action is usually more remote, and it is often entirely absent. Many discourses, written or spoken, that may be termed explanatory, cannot be properly described as forms of persuasion. In such instances the writer's or speaker's appeal is made almost exclusively to the intellect, and not at all, or only in a slight degree, to the imagination, the emotions, or the will. In an essay or a lecture on the life-work of some eminent scientist, for example, the writer or lecturer may deal with his subject from an exclusively technical and scientific point of view, describing and explaining fully and accurately the

results achieved : such a treatment will afford no opportunity for the art of persuasion, in the strict sense of the word. On the other hand, while dealing adequately with the subject from a scientific standpoint, he may also endeavour to arouse his auditors' curiosity, to stimulate their imagination, and lead them to study the subject more fully for themselves : into this treatment some of the elements of persuasion will necessarily enter.

Since, then, all persuasion involves a reference, more or less direct, to conduct and action, it is concerned also, more or less directly, with the future. The statesman and politician, whose subjects are war and peace, defence, the finances of the State, commerce, and social and political legislation, proposes some practical policy with regard to them, to be carried out in the future with the approval and help of those whom he addresses. His vision is directed mainly to the future, when the mistakes of the past may be retrieved, or a satisfactory adjustment made to new conditions. Of the preacher, too, it may be said that his main concern is the future : his aim is to secure that the future life of his hearers shall be better than their past, and his vision extends even to a life beyond this. The advocate in the courts desires to move the audience, in this case judge and jury, to future action, and to secure a favourable verdict. In explanatory discourse, the purpose of which generally is to apportion praise or blame, and in which the relation to conduct is as a rule not so determinate or explicit, the reference to the future is not so prominent ; yet it is always present in some degree whenever the effect of persuasion is produced.

But the present and the past, too, are involved in persuasion. In the persuasion of the law-courts past events and situations, wrongs or crimes that have been committed, debateable points of equity that have arisen, form the principal subject-matter ; and in explanatory discourse, also, the main reference is most often to the past or the present. The politician, again, often considers the past critically, and invites the disapproval of some present unsatisfactory situation to which past events or newly arisen conditions have led ; and the description of actually existing conditions, and the lessons of the past, also form a large part of the preacher's subject-matter.

In the case of both political and religious persuasion, however, the main reference is to the future ; and for this reason illustrations by comparison and example, which help us to judge of the future by the past and present, are especially important in those kinds. Again, in discourse in which the main emphasis is laid on the future, there is less scope for narrative, since it is impossible to narrate the future ; yet narration has its place here also, in so far as the future is interpreted from the past and the present. The emotional element, on the other hand, is often prominent in political and in religious persuasion, in the former because it is frequently intended to lead to a particular action, and in the latter both because of the reference to conduct that it implies and because of the inherent importance and dignity of its subject-matter. Since, however, religious persuasion aims not so much at inducing a particular action as at influencing conduct generally, and since its subject-matter is of a deeper and more



solemn import than that of political persuasion, the range of emotions to which it may appeal is, comparatively, less wide. For instance, the political speaker may employ fierce invective, ridicule, irony, cutting sarcasm, skilful flattery, and an artifice by which the baser as well as the nobler passions of his audience are wrought into a subservience to his purpose. But those methods of exciting emotion are clearly beyond the limits of pulpit eloquence. The preacher, as appealing to permanent and eternal interests, must avoid all appearance of sophistry, and cannot be content to arouse a merely temporary or a cheap emotion. Religious persuasion differs from political also in that such reasoning as it employs is based almost exclusively on general principles. Dealing, as it does, largely with the supernatural and what is beyond our everyday experience, its tendency is to appeal not to facts but to principles that, derived from authority and tradition, have acquired the sanction of accepted dogmas. From this circumstance has arisen that extreme bitterness, the *odium theologicum*, so opposed to the spirit of right persuasion, by which religious controversy has always been marked. Having exhausted all his arguments derived from tradition and authority, the theologian cannot, like the politician or the scientist, proceed to demonstrate new facts, derived from experience or experiment, in support of his conclusions. His attitude is therefore apt to be stubborn and immovable—on this rock, says he, I stand. It may be noted, however, that in recent years there has been a gradually increasing and welcome tendency to base religious discussion on the facts of spiritual experience rather than on tradition

and authority ; and there is room for a further development of religious discussion on those lines.

The legal and explanatory kinds of persuasion differ from the political and religious in that their main reference is to the past and the present. Legal persuasion deals principally with things past, and in it, therefore, narrative plays an important part. In explanatory persuasion exposition and illustration are specially important : discourses in this kind should be marked pre-eminently by clearness of statement and an imaginative charm that will invest actions with beauty or grandeur. Reasoning is not conspicuous in explanatory discourse, since reasoning forms no essential part of explanation ; but it holds a prominent place in legal persuasion, the past events with which it deals being capable of various interpretations and, from the obscurity of their relations, affording wide scope for proof. Both deductive and inductive methods of proof are employed in the persuasion of the law-courts, but especially the inductive, since proof in a legal case must necessarily consist largely in the citation of relevant facts bearing on the issue. In explanatory discourse there is, as a rule, less emotional appeal, and less of the element of debate, than in any of the other kinds, the reference to action being here more remote. On the other hand, it might be expected that, as being intended to lead to a particular action, the persuasion of the law-courts would be strongly emotional. It is so at times, and always the emotional appeal is present, even if only implicitly ; but few speeches delivered by counsel in court are outspokenly emotional. One might visit the law-courts daily for weeks on

end without hearing anything in the nature of an emotional outburst or even of an explicit appeal to emotion ; many of the speeches heard, indeed, would be of the driest and dreariest description. For this several reasons may be assigned. The audience addressed in a court of law is a small one, unlike the large and heterogeneous audiences addressed by politicians and preachers ; the decision of many of the questions that arise may depend largely upon strictly technical and legal details ; when the judge speaks, he must speak impartially, as the representative of the law, an attitude not usually favourable to the expression of deep emotion ; and when the advocate speaks, he is aware that one of the most important, if not the most important, of his hearers is the judge, an expert who, from the nature of his position, attaches special importance to legal principles and precedents, and will not easily be moved by merely emotional considerations.

As a form of expression, persuasion of every kind is peculiarly liable to become degenerate and perverted. The false rhetorician makes of it an art of sophistry, and uses it to exploit his neighbours and serve his own interests. He invokes the aid of arguments that he knows to be flimsy and specious. He drags in illustrations and images merely to attract and allure, or to turn his hearer's attention from the point at issue. He disguises unfavourable or unpleasant facts in the garb of plausibility. He flings ridicule at his opponents that he may stimulate the unconscious desire of his audience to feel superior. He appeals flamboyantly to emotions that are not inherent in the subject-matter, and

represents situations and events falsely, in order that he may arouse the emotions favourable to his purpose. And especially he plays upon his hearers' more selfish impulses and desires, which work to a large extent unconsciously—their love of power, their vanity, their greed, their hopes and suspicions and fears. Yet we should not bear too hardly on the false rhetorician: there is something of him in all of us, as soon as we begin to speak. Certainly, most speakers, however honest they may be, and however strongly convinced of the rightness of their cause, even if they should disdain to employ any of the other arts of false persuasion, unconsciously feel, and may probably act upon, the impulse to attain their ends at least by some adroit cajolery or flattery of their hearers. It should be added, however, that this impulse often has its origin not in merely interested motives but in a kindly feeling, and in the desire to be on good terms with others, and we may therefore rightly distinguish between it and the deliberate or elaborately sustained attempts of the false rhetorician to exploit his hearers' mental weaknesses and defects.

Our persuasion of others should rest on the same grounds as those on which the persuasion of ourselves has been based. We should try to repeat in others the same mental process that has been effectual in the persuasion of ourselves, disdaining to employ any arguments, any images, any ideas, or to appeal to any emotions, that have not first appealed strongly to ourselves. If we do this, our attitude will be at least sincere, even if our conclusions may be illogical or untrue. But the trouble here is that we do not know ourselves truly, that

self-persuasion is too often dominated by the merely personal and non-social instincts of the Unconscious. In persuading others, as in persuading ourselves, we should try to universalise the unconscious personal impulses and desires of the life of instinct, transmuting them by bringing them into relation with the conscious life of mind and spirit. Our aims will then be more impersonal and objective, and it will be impossible for us to call to our aid the arts of false rhetoric, which have for their end the exploitation of our neighbours for the furtherance of exclusive personal interests.



CHAPTER VIII

PERSUASION IN THE NOVEL AND THE  
DRAMA





## CHAPTER VIII

### PERSUASION IN THE NOVEL AND THE DRAMA—PERSUASION AND ART

**I**T has been noted above<sup>1</sup> that painting, sculpture, and music comprise some of the elements of persuasion, and may sometimes serve its purposes ; and this is true not only of those but of all the fine arts, and especially of literature. Thus poetry, appealing strongly to the imagination and the emotions, contains some of the elements of persuasion ; but it is more disinterested, less closely related to action, appeals more to the sense of beauty, and soars higher. The novel and the drama are the forms of literary art that are most nearly akin to persuasion as a form of expression.

The novel and the drama depict action and character and motive in their mutual relations, as conditioning or conditioned by one another. How men and women, worked upon by some emotion or sentiment or passion, by love, hatred, jealousy, fear, courage, anger, revenge, and placed in an environment that feeds and inflames or conflicts with their emotions, commit actions that lead to an emotional or dramatic crisis, and how that crisis is resolved—this is the typical line of development that

<sup>1</sup> *v.* Cap. V.

runs through the novel and the drama in their traditional forms. Every novel and play contains some description or indication of the characters' inner persuasions—their ideas, their reasonings, their imaginations, their feelings. This is the case even in those novels and plays that have for their main object the presentation of a stirring story, in which the element of action is most conspicuous: even in these the mental tendencies and characters of the actors, their dominant beliefs, their impulses and desires, must be portrayed naturally and plausibly, so as to exhibit the connection between action and character and motive.

Embodying thus the processes of inner persuasion in the characters depicted, the novel and the drama are adapted also to affect persuasively the reader or spectator. In reading a novel or seeing a play, the reader's or spectator's view is more comprehensive than that of any of the characters who figure in the action: he sees, and understands, more than they do, knowing their secret motives, their unconscious impulses and desires, the contradictory or false emotions by which they are animated. Behind the characters, all the time, stands the author, the showman of the place, revealing to us their good and bad qualities, their strength or their weakness, and implicitly inviting us to criticise and judge, while at the same time he may conform our thoughts subtly to the pattern of his own persuasions. If he is sarcastic and ironical in temperament, and is dealing with the minor defects and vanities of human nature, he may throw over the actions of his characters a subtle cloak of ironical comment or suggestion; or if, exhibiting the injustice of man

to man and the tyranny of human institutions, he is animated by fierce indignation, he may fire his readers to a similar indignation. The extent to which the author's personality protrudes itself in fiction and the drama varies in different cases, but even the most detached of novelists and dramatists exercises on those whom he addresses some characteristic persuasive influence.

Until recently, however, the essential purpose of fiction and drama has always been conceived as being radically different from that of persuasion. Fiction and drama, it has been said, while they influence belief and conduct, should not seek to do so consciously and directly : their aim should be the representation of action and character, not with a view of modifying our beliefs, but in and for itself. This attitude is based on a wider theory of the function of art generally, regarded as a human activity that has for its object the communication of emotion. The emotions of the artist, it is pointed out, should be primarily disinterested ; he should regard things from a detached standpoint, thus seeing them more completely, as they are in themselves ; his emotion should be purified of personal desire, which is apt to distort our vision ; and he should seek to arouse a similar emotion in others. For this point of view, the emotions excited by art should be static, and not kinetic ; they should arrest the mind, raising it above desire, and prompt no direct response in the way of action. But those qualities, essential to artistic emotion thus regarded, obviously find no place in the emotional appeal of persuasion. The speaker or writer whose intent is to persuade others appeals to their emotions with

the sole object of modifying their beliefs and inducing them to act ; his aim is immediately practical ; the emotion that he feels, and seeks to communicate to others, is saturated with personal desire. And for this reason it is frequently maintained that the more the novel and the drama approximate to persuasion, aiming deliberately at the modification of belief and conduct, the further they recede from art.

If we consider the older type of novel—those produced, say, before the '70s or '80s of last century, there would seem to be reason for believing that, in them at least, persuasion and art were not perfectly compatible. Until comparatively recently, the novelist, as a rule, regarded his rôle as being primarily that of a story-teller : his chief preoccupation was the entanglement and unravelling of a "plot". So regarded, the novel is an organised story having a beginning, a middle, and an end, running through which is a continuous series of situations, all related to, and combined into, the central plot or action. Such was the theory, implicitly or explicitly held, on which, for instance, Dickens and Charles Reade, with most of the other novelists of the nineteenth century, worked ; and, in consistency with that theory, the characteristic modes of expression of the novel were narration and description. Sometimes, however, as in the case of the two novelists we have named, the novel was employed also, incidentally, as a means of persuasion. Thus, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Dickens exposed the evil features of the scholastic system of his time, and Reade, in *It's Never Too Late to Mend* and *Hard Cash*, sought to arouse his readers' indigna-

tion against the cruelties perpetrated in English prisons and lunatic asylums. But in each of those books, as in nearly all the novels of persuasion of the nineteenth century, the writer's main object was to tell a story—the plot and the characterisation were the essential elements, and the task of persuasion had to be effected, as well as might be, within the narrative and descriptive style prescribed for the novel as a distinctive form of art.

That task, however, was in reality, an impossible one, for the continuous and artistic development of a plot by narration and description is inherently inconsistent with the exposition of a thesis or with detailed comment and argument. The writer's attitude in the two cases is essentially different: in telling a story, he should as far as possible stand aloof, not obtruding his own personality to any extent; while, if his object is to persuade, he must infuse into all his persuasion the emotion and desire he himself feels and must share them with his readers. Seeking to realise two ends inherently incompatible, the novel of persuasion, in the form it commonly assumed in the nineteenth century, certainly lost in artistic quality in so far as the elements of direct persuasion entered into it. It tended to be lacking in continuity and coherence, in unity of treatment, in harmony of atmosphere, in concentration, in intensity, in balance—all essential qualities of a work of art. The main purpose of Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*, for instance, is to tell an exciting story, and it succeeds in its purpose; but the story would have been better and more artistically told if its development had not been hampered by the writer's secondary object, to lead

to the reform of the laws for the regulation of lunatic asylums. To promote that secondary object, the novelist so manipulates his plot that it becomes in some respects unnatural and improbable. Thus, one after another, as the writer's persuasive purpose demands, the characters develop signs of lunacy, and are shifted from one asylum to another merely that the reader may be enabled to study different varieties of treatment in different places ; and, that the emotions stirred in the reader may be as intense as possible, the incidents that occur in the asylums are of the most sensational description, and are often fortuitous, obtruded too obviously by " the long arm of coincidence ", while the characters of the doctors and the attendants are depicted in lurid colours that are not the colours of life. Further, the continuity and coherence of the narrative are broken by lengthy disquisitions intended to acquaint the reader with the anomalies and absurdities of the laws regulating the treatment of the insane. All this makes for bad art ; and in this respect *Hard Cash* is typical of most novels that aim simultaneously at the narration of a complex plot and at the exposition of a thesis.

But, in recent years, there has arisen another type of the novel of persuasion, exemplified notably in some of Mr. H. G. Wells's later novels. In those the plot is of secondary importance, and the style is not purely, or even mainly, narrative ; persuasion is of the essence of the writer's purpose, and comment and argument—the ' discussion ', as it is sometimes called—hold a fundamental place. In so far as plot enters into the composition of this kind of novel, it is governed throughout by the writer's persuasive

purpose ; all the incidents, and their relation to one another, are determined by the beliefs and emotions with which he seeks to affect his readers. Possessing more unity of treatment and harmony of atmosphere, novels of this kind are not so liable to artistic deterioration as novels of the type of *Hard Cash*, in which the development of an elaborate plot through narrative is the fundamental element. In the later novel of persuasion the plot cannot be said to be interrupted or marred by the introduction of comment, because there is, in the strict sense of the word, no plot. At the centre of the story is some belief, based on a strong emotion, held by the writer, and from this as centre radiate, in more or less divergent lines, the successive incidents and situations depicted. The 'discussion' forms an integral part of the central theme, and is essentially interwoven with the incidents, so that it is possible for the writer to produce a fundamental unity of impression.

It is sometimes objected that this type of book cannot legitimately be called a novel, because its form is radically different. To this objection it may be replied that its form is different, but not radically so : it retains some elements of the older form, modifies others, and adds fresh elements. The objection seems to imply that the forms of art are incapable of development, and must remain fixed. But, as the life of man changes and develops, so too does every vital art. The newer novel of persuasion may be regarded as a natural product of its time. In the days of Jane Austen and Walter Scott the mental outlook of men and women was, necessarily, narrower than that of to-day : there were then no railways and rapid

steamships, communication was slow and difficult, which made men's minds also move slowly, science and mechanical invention were in their infancy, the conditions of social and industrial life were less complex and disturbed, and religious faith was settled and simple—the problems of life were fewer, and capable of an easier solution. Writing of his own or the even less complex times of the past, the novelist was troubled by no such unrest or doubts as distract our minds to-day. He was able to concentrate on one essential theme, usually the love between man and woman, and the environment of his characters was adapted to a simple and straightforward narrative treatment. To-day the unity of life has been broken for us: we see its scattered lights and flying shadows, and realise, with Heracleitus, that “all things flow”—life is movement, an endless succession. Seeing it thus, the novelist cannot impart to his expression of it the roundness and finish of the old conventional plot: its restless change, its divergent threads of moving interest, its inconclusiveness, cannot be exhibited in the fixed form of a complete narrative. And since life, being movement, is a movement towards something, in a particular direction, even if it be momentary, the novelist's view comprises, as well as the past and present, the future, which cannot be adequately expressed in a purely narrative style; in any detailed reference to the future the elements of discussion are necessarily involved.

The novel of narration, however, in which the writer aims simply at telling a story and depicting life in clear and brilliant colours, will always continue to be written and to find readers. In it there



is more repose, less doubt and mental conflict, more grace, and often more unity of treatment ; and those qualities will always attract. There is room both for the novel of narration and for the novel of persuasion ; and each has its characteristic qualities within the novel as a form of art. To say that the modern novel with a purpose, as seeking to communicate dynamic emotion to the reader, is necessarily inartistic and transgresses the limitations of the novel, is to misstate the case ; for dynamic emotion, as well as static, is a part of life, and the contemplation of life, or a picture of it, may arouse in us both those kinds, according to the point of view from which we regard it : the distinction between the two, indeed, is by no means absolute, and both are involved, in varying degrees, in every form of art. It cannot be denied, however, that many novels of persuasion, not only those of a generation or two back, but many of those written to-day, are inartistic in form, wanting in continuity, in coherence, in grace, in harmony. Those qualities, in fiction of this class, can arise only when the ' discussion ' is essentially interwoven with the incidents, and when an artistic balance is preserved between the more directly persuasive and the imaginative elements ; the writer must combine and interfuse essentially the parts of persuader and of narrator, and must not allow either to predominate unduly.

Here, however, we are concerned with the novel not so much in its artistic aspects as in its capacity for persuasion ; and in this respect it may be considered to possess certain advantages not shared by other more direct forms of persuasion. Employing the medium of fiction, the writer expresses

his personal views and emotions, not directly but in relation to, and through, his characters; his personality obtrudes itself, but only by implication; he is in the background, not in the foreground, of his picture. The tones of direct persuasion are apt to be more egoistic, more imperative, less colloquial, and for that reason they may be less convincing. The novel is well fitted to exhibit vividly the human issues of persuasion, the effects produced by a situation or conjunction of events upon the lives of human beings, and thus, by a touch of nature making the whole world kin, to move its readers by the compulsion of a universal appeal. Mr. H. G. Wells, in *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* and in *God the Invisible King*, deals with one and the same subject in the forms, respectively, of fiction and of pure discussion; and these books illustrate well the characteristic advantages and disadvantages of the two forms as means of persuasion. In reading the latter we may be repelled by the writer's very insistence and violence, by the partiality of his criticisms, and his obvious proselytising intent; but at the same time we are enabled to study the subject more fully and in its deeper and more abstract aspects. In the former book the persuasion is more effective in that it presents the issues as they appear to, and as they affect, a particularly human character; almost unconsciously, through our sympathy with Mr. Britling, we are drawn to the side of Mr. Wells. As treated by Mr. Wells and other 'moderns', the novel of persuasion would appear to be not only a legitimate and inevitable development of the art of fiction, but also an effective mode of persuasion.

The drama, on first consideration, might appear to be even better adapted to the purposes of persuasion than the novel; and in every drama, certainly, the elements of persuasion are involved. The vital inspiration both of the orator, whose sole aim is to persuade, and of the characters in a play, is the emotion that arises from the particular situation and circumstances in which they speak. The dramatic situation in which the characters of a play are placed creates a dynamic emotion that finds expression in their words and acts. So, too, the orator, as political or moral or social reformer, may be filled with indignation at the wrongs of his times and with an intense desire to right them, and the sentiment or passion with which he regards the situation is the motive force that inspires his words with life and power. The close relation between emotion and action, which may be termed the pivot on which all persuasion turns, finds continuous expression throughout every play. Frequently the characters address one another with a directly persuasive intention, and, when the 'villain' speaks, his persuasions are often sinister in kind, prompted by the motives and leading to the methods of secret impression and exploitation; in *Othello*, for instance, Iago's deceitful persuasions, and his exploitation of the leading characters, play an all important part in the development of the action.

But, in recent years, the dramatist has not been content merely to exemplify the process of persuasion in the intercourse of his characters. He, too, like the novelist, has attempted more explicitly and directly to modify the beliefs and conduct of his audience. He has assumed the rôle of preacher

and prophet, as well as that of the showman of life. The most prominent exponent of this type of drama in this country is Mr. Bernard Shaw, who claims that an essential technical factor in every good play, and the real centre of its interest, is 'the discussion' and, further, that this "new technique is new only on the modern stage", since "it has been used by preachers and orators ever since speech was invented".<sup>1</sup> In examining this claim, it will be well to institute a short comparison between the technique of the novel, which we have tried to show may be consistent with the purpose of persuasion, and that of the drama.

An essential difference between the two is that while, in drama, most of the situations are enacted before the spectator's eyes, in the novel, on the other hand, they are only described. The situations that form the subject-matter of fiction and the drama are frequently the results of remote causes that have continued to operate during a long period of time. This slow or gradual development of a situation the drama is not well fitted to represent, though it can present vividly the final result, the actual situation. The novel, in which the incidents are not enacted before our eyes, but only described, is much better adapted to exhibit the gradual development of action. While a drama depicts action in a succession of emotional crises, of critical situations linked by a central unity of theme, the novel can depict it not only at its moments of crisis but in its development. The typical dramatic treatment of a subject is rapid, crisp, and forcible, in the nature of a series of sharp

<sup>1</sup> v. *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.

strokes intended to touch the spectator's emotions keenly ; while the characteristic style of the novel is smoother, more continuous, and slower in its effects.

This difference between the technique of the drama and that of the novel points to the conclusion that the novel may be employed more effectively than the drama as a means of persuasion. Comment and discussion may be more easily and naturally interwoven with the gradual development of an action through description and narration than with the visible representation of it solely in its moments of crisis. In witnessing a drama of persuasion, as soon as the characters begin openly to expound a thesis or to point a moral, the spectator is apt to lose interest or feel bored ; and this feeling may arise not from any want of intellectual capacity on his part, but from an implicit or explicit perception that the essential form and technique of the drama have been transgressed, that the characteristic effect of drama must inevitably be marred as soon as the characters begin formally to discuss abstract ideas. The spectator at a play demands emotional excitement, and quite properly, because the form of drama and the conditions of stage representation are inherently adapted to produce it ; when he is obliged to listen to a series of speeches that expound a thesis or elaborate a moral, he may rightly feel as if he had been drawn to the theatre under false pretences. Brioux's play, *Damaged Goods*, illustrates well the kind of artistic degeneration to which the drama of persuasion is liable. The subject with which it deals is (in the delicately obscure language of the playbill) " the great social evil ",

and the whole of the first act is devoted to a narrative of past events that are destined to lead, in the second act, to the presentment of a dramatic situation. This narration of the past is in itself undramatic, but it must be admitted, of course, that there are many plays, not written with a purpose, in which the greater part of the first act is devoted to such narration. In this particular instance, however, there is a great deal of exposition, in which elaborate details of the effects produced by syphilis on the sufferer are given, with lengthy quotations from medical textbooks: the audience, in the meantime, suffering from boredom and extreme depression of spirit. In the second act there is real dramatic interest, and the curtain falls on a strong situation; but the third act lapses again into pure propaganda and declamation: three new characters are introduced, having no connection with the preceding incidents or the other characters in the play, but, as victims of 'the social evil', qualified to point, in long-drawn speeches, the moral that the dramatist desires to enforce. Such a sermonic scheme, it is obvious, is quite inconsistent with any theory of the drama as the art of emotional crisis.

It would almost seem as if Mr. Shaw himself were conscious of the limitations of the dramatic form as a method of persuasion, despite the ideas expressed in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*: else why, one may ask, those lengthy prefaces to his published plays? Few readers, indeed, would wish the prefaces to be omitted, so full of witty and stimulating writing are they; but the only theory that can satisfactorily account for their existence is that the plays they introduce are not in them-

selves adapted to persuade as effectively as Mr. Shaw would desire. In the prefaces, adopting a form of expression appropriate to persuasion, the writer is enabled to deal with his subject-matter more broadly and deeply, by argument and a sustained intellectual appeal as well as by the appeal to the imagination and the emotions. They may be considered to be the outcome of Mr. Shaw's essentially logical habit of thought, prompting him to supply the deficiencies of the plays, considered as instruments of persuasion, by the employment of a form of expression more suitable to his purpose.

It would be difficult to conceive of any novelist adopting this plan, prefacing his story with a discussion of its theme that should fill as many pages as the story itself. The novel admits more easily than the drama of a fusion of the elements of persuasion within its own essential form. Lengthy controversial prefaces to novels are superfluous, because, if a novelist be bent on persuasion, he can, without unduly straining the characteristic form of the novel, incorporate with its other subject-matter a considerable amount of controversy and argument. This it is impossible for the dramatist to do, for the essence of his art is to exhibit action in its moments of crisis and climax. It may be concluded, therefore, that while, in the novel, owing to its much greater elasticity of form, its capacity for absorbing detail, and its slower movement, the element of discussion may legitimately find a place, in the drama this is not the case.

Nevertheless, in so far as it is calculated to produce poignant emotion in the spectator, the drama may be regarded as an effective instrument of per-

suasion. In a play like Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, for instance, the dramatist leads to an intense realisation of the fact that 'there is one law for the rich, and another for the poor'; achieving this result not by any abstract comment or discussion, but through the strong emotion of pity that he evokes in the spectator through a series of dramatically contrasted situations or crises. The dramatist himself is animated and inspired by pity, and his treatment of his theme is therefore, in a sense, personal and interested; but, as an artist, he does not, like Brieux in *Damaged Goods*, permit his personal feelings to infringe upon or break up the appropriate form of drama: the emotional presentation of the subject-matter is not marred by the introduction of lengthy comment and argument.

The common ground upon which all art and all persuasion as a form of expression rest is emotion. Art is a human activity that aims at the conscious communication of an emotion to others by means of external signs—movements, lines, colours, sounds, or words. To this statement there may be added a rider to the effect that the emotions experienced by the artist and communicated to others should be, in a sense, disinterested and impersonal, purified of personal desire, resulting from a detached contemplation and a heightened vision of life. The idea underlying this conception of art is that personal feeling of any kind is apt to distort our interpretation of things, tending to make us omit here, and tone down or exaggerate there, so that our representation of them may be in harmony with our feeling towards them. This is undoubtedly true, and the circumstance accounts for the marked ten-



dency to degeneration that may be observed in all the forms of persuasion. Dominated by some powerful emotion that he seeks to satisfy at all costs, the propagandist's vision of truth is very apt to be partial or warped. At the same time it would be a great mistake to suppose that any or every emotion inevitably distorts our view of an object ; it does so only when the emotion we feel towards it is irrelevant. In a sense, it may be said that the artist cannot possibly escape from, and must necessarily be inspired by, personal emotion. Like every one else he is moved to action by his own feelings. Thus animated, he seeks to affect other people similarly, to impart to them his own vision—in some fashion or other to persuade. But, though inspired by personal emotion, he must remain undistracted by it, and represent truly the objects he depicts ; and this he can do only if the emotions that he feels are relevant, proceeding directly from the objects themselves, not from his own momentary moods or fixed prepossessions. In this respect he stands on the same ground as the writer or speaker in direct or formal persuasion. A consideration of the relations of art and persuasion leads us to the same conclusions regarding the criteria of true persuasion as we have previously reached by another road. In false persuasion we represent a situation not as it is in itself, but as we wish it, for our own purposes, to appear. To impel to the action desired, we arouse emotions that are essentially irrelevant, and have no inherent connection with the situation. True persuasion, on the other hand, resembles art in that the emotions by which it is inspired, and that it seeks to inspire,

proceed directly from the situation or object as it is in itself, not merely from the speaker's or writer's own selfish interests or unconscious impulses and repressed wishes.

Again, persuasion resembles art in that, as communicating emotion, it is a means of uniting men. The only effective bond of union among men is that of an emotion shared by them in common. In the ranks of the British Army that fought recently in the various fields of war there were to be found men who, from the different circumstances of their birth and education, varied widely in their opinions and outlook on life ; but, sharing a common life and a common danger, possessed by a common sentiment and purpose, they stood united.

Tolstoy maintains that the chief difference between good art and bad is that, while the former unites men, the latter separates them. It may be considered, however, that in following out this idea Tolstoy himself takes a somewhat narrow view of the emotions that are specifically adapted to be the subject-matter of art. "Only two kinds of feelings," he says, "do unite all men : first, feelings flowing from the perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man ; and next, the simple feelings of common life, accessible to everyone without exception—such as the feeling of merit, of pity, of cheerfulness, of tranquillity, etc. Only these two kinds of feelings can supply material for art good in its subject-matter. And the action of these two kinds of art, apparently so dissimilar, is one and the same. The feelings flowing from perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man—such as a feeling of sureness in truth,

devotion to the will of God, self-sacrifice, respect for and love of man—evoked by Christian religious perception ; and the simplest feelings—such as a softened or a merry mood caused by a song or an amusing jest intelligible to every one, or by a touching story, or a drawing, or a little doll : both alike produce one and the same effects—the loving union of man with man.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement may be applied to persuasion, as well as to art, with equal truth ; but we may accept it without narrowing the field of art to the limits imposed upon it by Tolstoy. He would exclude wholly, for instance, from the purview of art, the exhibition in theatres of feats of jugglery and acrobatic skill, and even the ballet. Yet these exhibitions, too, when the movements that constitute their medium of expression are performed easily and gracefully, may in their own fashion be artistic and stir feelings that will unite men. Even the dexterous performance of the acrobat may arouse in us a sense of admiration and almost of reverence for the human body, a kind of religious feeling such as Tolstoy desiderates as the essential effect to be looked for in good art. The acrobat may be an artist in his own kind and degree, and may awaken us, like every artist, to a heightened sense of life, and of the potentialities of man’s nature. Again, much of the “ so-called ” art of our time is excluded by Tolstoy from the province of true art because it deals with what he terms three insignificant and base feelings—“ the feeling of pride, the feeling of

<sup>1</sup> *What is Art?* By Leo Tolstoy. Translated, with an Introduction, by Aylmer Maude. The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd.

sexual desire, and the feeling of weariness of life ". In opposition to this view, however, it may be held, and quite consistently with Tolstoy's main position, that those feelings are, in the first place, not necessarily insignificant or base, but, on the contrary, are very significant and may have a character of nobility, and, secondly, that they are as capable of artistic treatment, as well fitted to produce the characteristic effect of art, as any other emotions. Art, we should remember, depends not merely on its subject-matter, but also on its form ; any aspect of life, appropriately treated, may be its subject-matter. According to the distinction Tolstoy makes, a novel such as Mr. George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* could not properly be described as art. Yet it may be considered that this book, by its detached presentment of incident and character, enabling the reader to realise them clearly and significantly, more truly than if he had been an actual spectator of the issues, creates inevitably a feeling of pity, a sense of the limitations of our lives—emotions fitted to unite us all in the realisation of our common weakness.

Bad art, it is true, as Tolstoy maintains, produces nothing of this unifying effect. It delineates objects not as they are, but as coloured and distorted by the artist's personal desires ; its motives are exclusively interested ; and its typical qualities are insincerity, exaggeration, and lack of truth, which are principles of separation, not of union, between man and man. And in this respect bad persuasion resembles bad art. False persuasion, as has been pointed out in Chapter IV, is based on a principle of exclusiveness : its motives are inter-

ested and selfish. Conceiving himself as separate from others, having his own ends, or the ends of his special group, to realise, at the expense of other people if they may not be realised otherwise, the false rhetorician employs any device that will assist him to exploit his neighbours. He reasons fallaciously, exaggerates and distorts facts, and excites in his hearers irrelevant images and emotions. He sacrifices truth of presentment for the attainment of his personal ends. His aim, generally, is to retain or gain power for himself or his group, and this leads to a disregard of the claims and rights of others. True persuasion, like true art, is based on the principles of respect for human nature and human life and personality, and as a form of expression it is marked by the freshness, individuality, and sincerity of its emotional appeal : it is thus, like good art, fitted to promote brotherhood and unity among men.



CHAPTER IX

THE PERSUASION OF THE FUTURE





## CHAPTER IX

### THE PERSUASION OF THE FUTURE

THE remark is frequently heard that human nature does not change, the speaker generally implying thereby that never will men and women cease to display their innate frailty or folly or wickedness. There is truth in the remark, no doubt ; but it must not be understood as meaning that our mental tendencies are incapable of modification. Recent scientific investigation has established that " nature " works much less powerfully in living organisms than the theories of Darwinism and post-Darwinism had led us to suppose, and that " nurture " is correspondingly more powerful. This position is demonstrated and illustrated in a very interesting fashion by Mr. Benjamin Kidd in the last chapter of his book, *The Science of Power* ; and in other chapters of the same book he cites the instances of Japan and Germany to show how the mental outlook of whole nations may be profoundly modified in a comparatively short period of time. The persuasions of men and women, as social beings, alter, and the nature of the modifications they undergo is determined by the dominant spirit of time and place.

In recent years, for example, in all civilised countries, persuasion has been marked by a strong tendency to apply the methods of physical science to the sphere of human interests, a tendency responsible for many of the evils that mar to-day the life of both individuals and communities. We have too often failed to realise that men and women differ essentially from inanimate objects as the material of reasoning. Physical objects we can classify and confine in compartments more precisely, subject to experiment, and, as the result of our experiments, predict with certainty their behaviour under specified conditions. The control that we have thus been able to establish over the physical world we have sought to extend to human affairs, forgetting that men are not things, refuse to be classified uniformly, and that no one can predict with absolute certainty the behaviour of any human being under any given circumstances. As a result, our persuasions have been too often animated by the spirit of exclusiveness, and have expressed themselves in the methods of secret impression and exploitation. Class distinctions have been intensified, and each class has worked to promote its own interests only. Men have been experimented upon, and have been treated as tools and machines, not as human beings, simply in order that the power or wealth of the experimenters and manipulators might be increased.

We are now, however, beginning to realise the social consequences that this attitude of thought entails: we begin to see more and more clearly that it leads inevitably to isolation between man and man, disputes between class and class, and war between nation and nation. The logic of recent

events has helped to bring this truth home to us with a vengeance. The main lesson that the War should have taught us is that neither individuals nor nations are to be treated merely as tools by other individuals or nations, however powerful; that individuality, alike in men and nations, however weak or helpless, has its paramount claims to respect. By that consideration the persuasion of the future, if it is to lead to an effective reconstruction, more favourable to the principle of growth in individuals and communities, will be powerfully influenced.

Even before the War many tendencies conducive to that idea were at work. For corroboration of this we may consider the trend of modern art, since art always reflects in some way or other current ideas and modes of thought.

One of the main tendencies of modern art is the tendency to realism, the central principle of which is its respect for existence and individuality as such. To look at things with a certain pleasure and joy in them for their own sake, regarding nothing as alien, to contemplate them with so intense and sympathetic an intuition that their essential individuality is vividly realised, to represent life in all its aspects as it really is—that is the fundamental quest and aim of the realistic artist. And, in more recent times, for the spirit of realism has never been wholly absent from art, there has appeared a more specific tendency, leading the artist to turn his vision more exclusively towards humanity, and more exclusively inwards, urging him to penetrate and reveal the inmost thoughts, imaginations, and emotions of men and women—in the contempla-

tion and representation of these, too, as individual and significant, as well as of the outward aspects of life, he finds the opportunities of his art. This tendency is especially marked in the typically modern forms of the novel and the drama, in the development of which psychological realism has played a large part. The essential aim of the modern novelist or dramatist is to depict actual life, not merely in its outward manifestations, but in its inward significance. He reveals to us the hidden as well as the patent springs of our actions—the unconscious impulses, the repressed wishes, the vanities and exclusive ambitions, the hopes and fears and indignations that move us to act and that lead to the comedies and tragedies of life. He depicts the differences in the nature of men and women, seeing each of his characters as uniquely distinctive in mind and temperament. All this makes for a better understanding and a more sympathetic realisation of the conditions of life both in its ampler prospects and in its limitations. The modern novel and drama have enlarged the scope of our sympathies, increased our sensitiveness and capacity for response to the needs of men and women, and heightened our sense of respect for individuality; and, as having this effect, they are influences favourable to right persuasion—conducive to gentleness and tolerance, and subversive of the spirit of aggression and exploitation.

In education, again, which, like art, always represents the tendencies of an epoch, we begin to see reflected to-day the same principle of respect for individuality and revolt against the classification of human beings as similar when they are really

different. Here, indeed, the reactionary spirit of professionalism may act as a clog on the wheel of progress, but cannot stop its movement. A truer spirit of freedom is now beginning to pervade the work of our schools. The first principle of good teaching, it may be considered, is that the teacher should have respect for his pupils ; and this means that he must know and be in sympathy with them, must be aware of their mental attitudes and impulses and situations, the present conditions of their lives and their future potentialities : only through that knowledge can he really show his respect for them and assist in developing their individuality. In the past, a serious hindrance to true educational work in the schools has been the rigid classification of the pupils in groups, leading to the system of collective teaching more or less regardless of individuality. It is now beginning to be recognised that, when forty or fifty pupils are rigidly classified and taught together, there must always be some who lag behind, while the progress of others will be delayed on account of the laggards. The recognition of this fact has already led to a considerable diminution in the amount of the collective teaching given : the teacher talks less himself, and encourages the pupils to work more actively, and more individually, on the lines suited to them. Under the system of rigid classification of pupils each in some way essentially different from the other the teacher must needs employ against them the methods of repression and force, or discourage rebellion by an artificial system of rewards and punishments ; his teaching is the same for all the pupils ; but, as their attainments and potentialities and character are different in each

instance, and as individuality will always assert itself despite of, and because of, repression, antagonism between teacher and pupils is a necessary consequence. In the schools of the future the teaching, hampered and restricted less by the old rigid artificial classifications, will be based on a closer realisation of the differences between the pupils and on a deeper respect for individuality and freedom.

Some of the more recent developments of science illustrate similar tendencies. We have, it is true, in this and a previous chapter represented the methods of physical science as being inapplicable, in their entirety, to the treatment of human beings, and have attributed to the obsession of the scientific point of view some of the most pernicious tendencies of false persuasion. The reference in those passages, however, was exclusively to physical science. In recent years, science, like art, has turned its vision inwards, and a specifically modern science of psychology is the result. The methods of modern psychology differ from those of the physical sciences in that, in any enquiry into the behaviour of living or of human beings, it takes into account their individual differences and the varying personal factors involved. The difference between the standpoint of the psychologist and that of the physiologist, for instance, who employs purely the methods of physical science, is well illustrated in the following passage from Dr. Charles S. Myers' little book on *Present Day Applications of Psychology* :—" Let us suppose that the physiologically trained physician wishes to determine the keenness of vision in a subject. He confronts him with the well-known cards

of test-types. He is not particular in the use of any well-defined method of procedure. Individual differences of familiarity with letters, due to illiteracy, are not taken into account. Differences in the case of recognition of different letters are not considered. The physiologist proceeds in his investigation of sensory experiences just as if he were dealing with the measurement of *pure* sensation. He takes no account of the psychological complications just mentioned, nor of others such as the influence of excitement, fatigue, and individual differences in the use of interpretation. The psychologist, on the other hand, carefully predetermines his method, choosing one of the established methods which can be precisely repeated on the same subject or on other subjects for comparison of individual differences or of the psychological factors of practice, fatigue, and the like. He chooses an apparatus which shall eliminate, as far as possible, differences due to education, interpretation, etc."

The scope of the inductive method, as applied in psychology and in the discussion of human affairs, has become greatly enlarged. In those spheres it is now recognised that the 'facts of the case' include not only material and physical, but psychological, facts, and, in particular, that our instincts, impulses, and emotions are vitally important factors in the consideration of every human problem. This tendency to consider not merely the material conditions that limit action, but the instincts and feelings that prompt it, is characteristic of the realistic attitude towards life, which is as strongly marked a feature of modern thought as it is of modern art. We are beginning to understand

that in politics, for instance, much might be gained by a closer study of men's political impulses, of the part played in politics by the gregarious instinct, by ambition, by the desire for power, by patriotism, pride, pugnacity, and personal affection, all of which modify men's political beliefs and actions. Understanding how our attitude to current questions is affected by, and how politicians seek to play upon, those feelings and impulses, we shall be more likely to persuade ourselves rightly and to resist successfully any attempts made to exploit us through an illicit appeal to emotion. Politicians, too, by taking into consideration the psychological factors involved in their problems, may save themselves from committing serious blunders. If, for instance, the statesmen of victorious nations, before deciding upon and imposing terms of peace upon conquered nations, had always studied carefully the factors of national and racial psychology involved in the situation, the conditions imposed would, in many instances, have been less likely to be resented by the conquered nations, and less likely to lead—as has so often happened in the past—to a renewal of hostilities. Again, in economics, vitally important questions would be solved, or would be well on the way to solution, if we could decide rightly as to the nature and limitations of the desire for property; and, in religion, the study of mystical feeling, reverence, the desire to convert, to proselytise even by persecution, the love of power, and (in the sphere of missionary endeavour) the love of adventure, will explain much that would otherwise be obscure to us in the history of religion and in the religious life of to-day.



The increasing tendency of all discussion to attach importance to the facts of human nature may be illustrated by a more detailed reference to recent and present-day questions.

At the beginning of the War many people were of the opinion that the drink traffic in this country ought to be absolutely prohibited. Judged from a purely rational standpoint, the arguments in favour of pursuing this course were extremely strong, and at one time it appeared to be quite possible that the sale of liquor would be prohibited for the duration of the War. But this result did not follow, simply because the ruling politicians came to realise that the predominant feeling of the working-classes, whose labour and support were of the first importance for the successful prosecution of the War, was strongly against such a policy. Many working-men believe, with or without reason, that beer enables them to work more efficiently, adds to the amenities of social life, and that to prohibit absolutely the sale of liquor would be to interfere unduly with the liberty of the individual. Confronted by those sentiments, the politicians, who at first fulminated so fiercely that the brewers must have trembled in their shoes for the very existence of their industry, gradually began to concede more and more to the demands of "the trade", which, so far from being ruined, was never more prosperous financially than during the period of the War.

Again, later on, it became an urgent question whether conscription should or should not be extended to Ireland. On *a priori* grounds the question admitted of only one answer. Every consideration of principle pointed to the conclusion that Ireland,

as an integral part of the (nominally) United Kingdom, should be conscripted. The ruling politicians, men of principle all, assumed a determined attitude: conscription it was to be. But presently they showed signs of wavering. They had omitted, it appeared, to take into consideration the sentiments of Catholic Ireland, very important factors in the situation. So important, indeed, on consideration, were those factors perceived to be that conscription was not enforced, and it was deemed advisable, once more, to adopt the attitude of "Wait and See".

Most of the opposition to the reform of the Divorce Laws proceeds from the theological belief that to increase the facilities of divorce would be to act against the principles of Christianity and "profane the sanctity of marriage". As men of principle, the theologians are entitled to respect; but, among the general public, a more detailed consideration of the facts of the case, and especially of men and women as emotional beings, distinct and sometimes incompatible in temperament and character, is rapidly leading to the conclusion that the laws laid down by the early Church ought not to be made to apply to people living two thousand years later under entirely different conditions. The following passage dealing with the subject, from a speech by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, may be quoted as an instance of persuasion that is animated by a vivid realisation of the human factors involved, leading to a departure from traditional belief based on the method of *a priori* argument. "The British workman," he said, "is a migratory person. He is not anchored to his job as most of us are. If a man is an expert carpenter, he is as sure of a job in

Sydney or in San Francisco as in Manchester. The result is that he very easily moves on if he desires it. He can also leave his wife behind, and I regret to say he very often does. Consider the woman's position. This is a very common case. She waited a year. No word. She had learned some trade to earn her bread. She made her new life. Five years, ten years, passed. She met some other man who would gladly make her his wife. She learned, perhaps, to love him, and yet she could never marry, for how could she ever be sure that her first husband would not come back into her life? He might be dead, but she could not prove it, and still she could not marry. She might eat out her heart in solitude, or she might become the other man's mistress. Was that right? Could that be Christian charity, when the woman, through no fault of her own, could only have such alternatives as that? Did they think the bonds of Christ were ever made to sustain such a position? Yet that was the assertion, the blasphemous assertion, as it seemed to him, with which we were eternally confronted."<sup>1</sup>

Even the judges in the law courts, whose decisions are generally based on precedent and tradition, are ceasing to enforce so rigorously the letter of the law, and show an inclination to make concessions to the spirit of the age and the changing conditions of life. An appeal case was tried recently before the House of Lords, involving a decision as to the validity of a legacy that had been made to the Secular Society, the main objects of which, as stated in its memorandum, is "to promote, in such

<sup>1</sup> Manchester Free Trade Hall, October 8, 1917. *Daily Telegraph Report.*

ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the end of thought and action." The testator's heir-at-law and next-of-kin contested the validity of the gift on the ground that the society was constituted for illegal purposes, namely, the subversion of the Christian and all other religions. Mr. Justice Joyce had decided in favour of the society, and the Court of Appeal had affirmed his decision. When the question came before the House of Lords, the Lord Chancellor was in favour of allowing the appeal, on the ground that "it was difficult to see how a change in the spirit of the age could justify a change in the principle of the law by a judicial decision. They had to deal not with a rule of public policy, which might fluctuate with the ages, but with a definite rule of the law, to the effect that anything hostile to Christianity was illegal. It could never be the duty of a court of law to begin by enquiring what was the spirit of the age, and then, in supposed conformity with that, decide what the law was. If the law was to be altered, the change must be effected, not by judicial decision, but by an Act of Legislature". This utterance reflects the traditional attitude of the Law to all questions brought before it for decision. None the less, by a majority, the House of Lords, deferring to "the spirit of the age", upheld the previous judgments, and affirmed the validity of the gift.

The tendency to consider fixed principles as liable to be modified by changed circumstances, or by factors that had previously been neglected, is, on

the whole, one which makes for right persuasion. A principle which does not comprise, or take into account, essential factors in the situation to which it is applied, is necessarily an imperfect or a false principle : it achieves a facile unity at the expense of truth. But it is possible, on the other hand, to neglect the real truth that may underlie a given principle and to lay undue stress on circumstances that, though appealing strongly to the modern attitude of relativity, may be comparatively unimportant, or even irrelevant. Thus, in several recent trials for murder, arising from conditions produced by the War, the jury obviously neglected unduly the principles of the law, and based their decision exclusively on sentimental grounds. The situation involved in those cases was, briefly, as follows :— A soldier or sailor had left his wife to serve his country ; in his absence she had proved unfaithful ; the husband returned, and the situation moved abruptly to a tragic end. In several such instances, the jury, moved exclusively by the emotional facts of the case, acquitted the prisoner. This may perhaps be justly considered as, in the words used by Mr. Justice Avory in the course of a trial of this kind, “ trifling with the crime of murder ”. It illustrates an attitude that, in its way, is no less partial and prejudiced than the attitude of unconsidered and implicit faith in established principles. An attempt is sometimes made to excuse such “ sentimental ” verdicts on the plea that they are based upon what is vaguely termed “ the unwritten law ” ; but such attempts to veil the partiality of our views under the glamour of an alluring phrase should carry little or no conviction

to our minds. Most established principles, though not all, embody elements of truth in so far as they may have resulted from a consideration of essential facts; and the neglect of those facts is no less an error than the failure to take into consideration other facts that may have been non-existent, or ignored, at the time when the principles were established or accepted. To satisfy the claims of truth no less comprehensive a view than one which comprises all the essential facts of the case will serve.

In close harmony with the modern tendency to base persuasion on a wider consideration of facts is the growing tendency to employ quantitative methods of persuasion. Men are no longer to be persuaded by a mere appeal to general principles; they want facts, and facts definitely and precisely stated, from which they may draw their own conclusions. The quantitative method finds its most obvious expression in the use of statistics. Every reader of the newspapers must have been impressed by the extent to which detailed statistical calculations have entered into all discussions relating to the War. For a proper consideration of the questions, for instance, of food control and national service, it was found necessary to collect a mass of statistical information which had previously been lacking, and which, no doubt, will prove to be of immense value in the future, when the problems of reconstruction come to be considered. In the past, the pioneers of social reform have been greatly hampered by the lack of precise data and exact measurement of needs and resources—this lack has been to some extent supplied by the numerous “forms” that had to be filled up during the War.

The persuasive effect of numerical statistics arises from the circumstance that they enable us to form exact ideas of, or to picture concretely and vividly, the facts of a case. Thus, at a certain stage of the War, in a speech before the Reichstag, pleading for a peace by mutual concessions, Herr Scheidemann expressed his point of view effectively in the following passage :—" Suppose the war carried on for a hundred days beyond the day on which we could have peace by understanding. That would mean extra expenditure of £50,000,000, not counting great burdens on local communities, not counting terrible damage to economic life, without counting the sacrifices of individual families for their members on the field. If twelve hundred Germans are killed daily and three thousand wounded, we get in a hundred days a total of 300,000 wounded and 120,000 killed. That is a brilliant picture of conquest."

But it is not only in terms of number that the quantitative method of thinking expresses itself. Mr. Graham Wallas, in *Human Nature in Politics*, points out that a picture, for instance, " may be sometimes nearer to quantitative truth, more easily remembered and more useful for purposes of argument and verification than a row of figures. The most exact quantitative political document that I ever saw was a set of photographs of all the women admitted to an inebriate home. The photographs demonstrated, more precisely than any record of approximate measurement could have done, the varying facts of physical and nervous structure ".<sup>1</sup>

The quantitative method, however, it must be

<sup>1</sup> *Human Nature in Politics*. By Graham Wallas. London : Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd. 1908.

remarked, is subject to very distinct limitations. It cannot, for instance, enable us to come to a decision in any question involving a comparison between disparate emotions and sentiments. By it we may measure different degrees of strength in similar mental states or operations ; through quantitative experiment we may gauge accurately a man's power of memory or his quickness of observation ; but when we have to assess the comparative value of disparate emotions or sentiments it can afford us no assistance. Its utility in persuasion is therefore limited, since all deliberate choice of action, which is the subject of persuasion, necessitates a decision, implicit or explicit, as to the relative value of the sentiments that might be satisfied by one course of action or another. If a statesman had to decide whether war should or should not be declared against another nation, he might have to consider, on the one hand, the money that would be saved, the material gain that would accrue, through a decision in favour of peace, and, on the other hand, the loss of national honour that might be involved in such a policy. Between those two disparate values no quantitative method of thinking could enable him to choose. Mr. Graham Wallas, in the book just referred to, recognises this objection to the quantitative method, but dismisses it rather summarily. "The obvious answer," he says, "is that statesmen have to act, and that whoever acts does somehow balance all the alternatives which are before him". The "somehow" of this statement would appear to stand in need of further explanation. The "balancing" of alternatives, of which Mr. Wallas speaks, is, surely, in



no sense quantitative, but must be based on a consideration of the *quality* of the alternatives. When we have to make a decision between two or more different actions or between two or more disparate values, we must ultimately have recourse to qualitative thinking.

By the quantitative method, however, we may discover suitable means for the attainment of our ends, and it is especially valuable for this purpose because it deals with questions not vaguely but in precise terms, and because it is based on a realisation of the fact that every individual case with which it deals is different from every other, and should be investigated with an eye to all its factors in their relative importance. In this respect it is typical of the inductive spirit of modern persuasion, which approaches questions untrammelled by tradition or by the acceptance of principles lightly taken for granted, subjecting all its subject-matter to independent and disinterested enquiry.

Throughout this book two opposite principles of persuasion have been indicated—the principle of exclusiveness, and the principle of respect for human nature, based on a recognition of the fact that no individual, and no group of individuals, is self-sufficient, and that each has need of every other. The persuasions of individuals and groups will always, no doubt, continue to be moved by both of those principles; but the tendencies of our time, and recent important events, suggest that in the future a deeper value may be attached to the latter. And this would appear to apply more particularly to group-persuasion. The group organisations of the past have been influenced too much by the

principle of exclusiveness ; those of the future, it may be hoped, will be animated more deeply by respect for human nature as such. At the present time we would appear to be entering on a period of transition between the two types. Trades Unions in the past, instead of being friendly societies linking men in fellowship, have too often been rather fighting units, in conflict with both employers and consumers ; but the advisability of forming industrial councils in which representatives of Capital and of Labour will meet as members of one body is now widely recognised.<sup>1</sup> Further, for some time before the war broke out a movement had been made in the direction of international co-operation between Trades Unions, and in this respect they have been the pioneers of a wider movement that may be destined to exercise a profound influence on human life. In view of recent happenings, there can be little doubt that, in the future, joint international action in social, political, and economic affairs will be exercised at least more frequently than in the past. The scheme for a League of Nations indicates that the desirability of inter-state action is being more and more fully recognised ; and it leads logically to an even wider conception, of a world-wide international law, not imposed by any external authority and maintained by military power, but arising out of the essential needs of man, out of a deep inner sense of the value of humanity as such and of the necessary interdependence of each upon all.

<sup>1</sup> v. Report of the Whitley Committee on Joint Standing Industrial Councils.

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